

# Tobacco in high schools: the main changes observed from 2002 to 2006

Four years after an initial survey into the application of the Evin law in high schools, a new survey examines changes in the rules concerning tobacco and its uses.

Serge  
Karsenty

Cristina  
Díaz Gómez

*According to the Prime Minister's declarations of 8 October 2006, the decree which will be replacing the law of May 1992, adopted to enforce the Evin law, will totally forbid the use of tobacco in public, and particularly in educational institutions (schools, and secondary education institutions). This measure will apply as from 1 February 2007. No exceptions will be tolerated. Consequently, the high schools will not be permitted to have «smoking rooms» on their premises or authorised smoking areas outside the buildings. This rule will apply to everyone, regardless of the age or status of the persons concerned.*

*The new situation which the public authorities are seeking to bring about will mark a significant shift from the practices and rules which were applicable in high schools in 2006. Nevertheless, the changes occurring over the last four years have shown that the fight against smoking in high schools has definitely moved up a gear, meaning that we can expect improved results from public policies in 2007 compared to the largely unsuccessful attempts undertaken in 1977 or 1992.*

*This explains the importance of the survey described in this issue of Tendances which also presents an overview of the main results.*

## Introduction

A ban on smoking in educational environments was first established via the Veil law (1976). However, the decree of September 1977 was never applied out in the field, and underwent no administrative assessment. The Evin law (1991) reiterated and clarified this principle via the decree of May 1992. A decade after the implementation of this legislation following on from the Evin law, the National Education Ministry (NEM) and the Interministerial Mission for the fight against drugs and drug addiction (MILDT – Mission interministérielle de lutte contre la drogue et

la toxicomanie) asked the French monitoring centre for drugs and drug addiction (OFDT) to carry out an assessment of the implementation of this law in educational environments. Organised in early 2002, based on a huge, representative sample of public and private schools and secondary education institutions, this initial survey made it possible to draw up a complete overview of the rules and common practices within the French educational system where tobacco consumption is concerned (OFDT, 2003). Four years later, the NEM, MILDT and the Ministry of Health were keen to see how these rules and practices had changed in the educational environment.

The OFDT was consequently once again appointed to oversee this assessment. The schedule of conditions for the new survey to be carried out focused on the situation in high schools, the category of institutions which, in view of the results from the 2002 survey, experienced the greatest difficulties in applying public rules. The Institut d'observation et de décision (IOD) was the project manager for these two waves of surveys.

The complete 2002 survey protocol was reproduced identically. The questionnaires aimed at the three population groups surveyed (principals, staff and pupils) used questions identical to those set in 2002, adding a handful of additional questions concerning key themes (precise details concerning playgrounds, access by the under 16s to reserved areas and exposure to cigarette smoke) or retrospective questions making it possible to assess the situation prior to and after September 2003 for this new sample.

The priority for both surveys was to better understand the institutional behaviour of high schools before focusing specifically on the attitudes and behaviour of the various members of the educational community. This goal influenced the selection of the observation unit for the survey, which is the individual educational institution. The general standard was therefore to process and present the results of the survey based on the «schools» viewed collectively. Questions regarding individual behaviour (the smoking habits of respondents) or opinions (agreement with the Evin Law) were nevertheless analysed on an «individual» basis. In order to present the results on a «collective institution» basis, the chosen method was to use the response mentioned by an absolute majority of the respondents (more than 50% of individuals) whether staff or pupils.

The sample size from the high schools was substantially increased compared to that of 2002. The random sampling principles and the guarantee of anonymity for respondents were fully observed under conditions identical to those used in 2002. The final sample comprised 235 high schools. Apart from the 235 principals, 2,318 members of staff and 9,476 high school pupils completed the proposed self-administered questionnaires under conditions identical to those used in 2002.

Thanks to the diversity and redundancy of the information received from these three monitored sources faced with the same situations, the results obtained by the 2006 survey make it possible to draw up an overview of the changes occurring during the four years in question, based on results constituting decisive proof. They also make it possible to better understand and interpret the results obtained during the first assessment.

In order to guarantee the protection of non-smokers, the law of 10 January 1991 states that: *«it is forbidden to smoke in areas assigned to collective and particularly educational use, (...), except in those areas expressly set aside for smokers»*. (Article L. 3511-7 of the Public Health Code). The decree dated 29 May 1992 states that: *«the ban (...) applies to all enclosed and covered areas welcoming the public, or which constitute working areas (...)»*, and where educational institutions are concerned, *«in open areas frequented by pupils (...) while they are present»* (R3511-1) and that *«the ban on smoking does not apply to areas set aside for smokers, inside the premises mentioned in article R.3511-1»*. It furthermore adds that: *«these smoking areas will be determined (...) taking account of their volume, layout, usage conditions and ventilation, in addition to the need to provide protection for non-smokers»* (R3511-2), that *«within the perimeter of high schools (lycées), when the premises differ from the junior high schools (collèges), (...) rooms (...) may be made available for use by smokers»* (R3511-9) and finally that minors under the age of 16 *«must not have access to the areas made available to smokers»* (R3511-10).

## Smoking bans and the consumption of tobacco by pupils

The true situation concerning smoking bans in high schools is difficult to assess based purely on replies from the headmasters of such schools. On the other hand, the observations made by the high school pupils themselves (and particularly those who smoke) provide clear, unambiguous information. This data is usually backed up by the observations made by the staff interviewed.

In 2002, a majority of pupils who smoked stated that they never smoke inside the high school in 14% of schools. This figure rose to 40% in 2006 (please see table 1). These figures provide a reliable indicator of the schools to-

tally banning smoking. Indeed, the assessment details of pupils who smoked are backed up by the following observations.

In both 2002 and 2006, the high schools in which the pupils were able to smoke in a room but not in a playground were very much in the minority (just around 1%).

On the other hand, the proportion of high schools in which smoking is authorised in a playground in 2006 was 59% according to the replies from all high school respondents taken together. The observations made by the staff concerning this particular point support this figure. Consequently, that leaves 40% of high schools in which smoking is not allowed at all.

In 2002, the percentage of high schools in which a majority of pupils stated that they «occasionally see» other people smoking in the playground or under a covered playground area stood at 85% (OFDT, 2003).

Thus, in 2006 at least 40% of high schools implemented a total ban on smoking for pupils. This ban appeared to be massively effective despite a handful of infringements to the rules. The latter are highlighted by the 64% of schools in which a majority of the high school pupils stated that they «occasionally see» other pupils smoking in the playground itself or under a covered area of the playground. If this ban was fully observed, this observation would only concern 60% of high schools.

In view of all of all this information, we can estimate that at least a quarter of high schools in France have implemented a total ban on smoking for pupils during the last four years.

«Authorised» situations are also more numerous within the high schools (table 2). Whereas in 2002 only 40% of principals stated that they had created «smoking areas» for use by pupils, 54% stated that such areas had been created when interviewed in 2006.

The proportion of schools in which «authorised» situations (the existence of «smoking areas» for pupils) and «de facto» situations (in which smoking by pupils is tolerated) do not overlap has shrunk to a small minority. It concerns 6% of high schools in 2006 compared to 45% in 2002. This is the result of both an increase in total smoking bans on pupils and the formal establishment of areas in which smoking is authorised, to the exclusion of all other areas.

**Table 1 - Changes in the percentage of smokers among high school students**

	Pupils who smoke	
	2006	2002
No. of schools	235	87
- Frequently	33%	69%
- From time to time	0%	0%
- Rarely	0%	0%
- Never	40%	14%
Schools with no majority answer	27%	17%

Source OFDT/IOD

## High school pupils under the age of 16

According to the statements made by the headmasters of the schools, in 2006 just 14% of high schools had introduced restricted access to the «smoking areas» for pupils aged under 16. If we strictly consider the percentage of those providing smoking areas for pupils, in 70% of the high schools concerned, the principals declared that there was no means available to prevent access to these areas by pupils under the age of 16. If we add to this the high number of non-respondents (9%), this means that exactly three quarters of the high schools concerned do not have measures in place in order to enforce the specific rule concerning pupils under the age of 16. We should remember that this group of high school pupils account on average for a fifth of the total high school pupil population.

**Table 2 - The formal creation of "smoking areas" for pupils (2002-2006)**

The existence of areas specifically set aside for pupils who smoke (at least one, whether outdoors or indoors)

	Principals	
	2006	2002
No. of schools	235	86
- Yes	54%	40%
- No	44%	56%
- No reply	2%	4%

Source OFDT/IOD

## Smoking among high school pupils

Alongside the reinforcement of the rules banning smoking within the perimeter of high schools, the prevalence of smoking among high school pupils fell sharply between 2002 and 2006. In the respective samples for 2002 and 2006, the percentage of regular smokers (smoking at least one cigarette per day) fell from 32% to 24% of all pupils. This national trend has already been identified (Beck 2006 and Wilquin 2006) and has been judiciously attributed to the three tobacco price increases in 2003 and early 2004. Under certain hypotheses, the combined effects of the recent smoking bans and the fall in the prevalence of tobacco consumption are considered as bringing about a reduction in the number of pupils smoking within the perimeter of the high schools, which can be estimated at 48%.

Finally, in 2006 some light can be shed on the question of the precise effect of smoking bans in high schools on the prevalence of smoking among high school pupils using an across-the-board approach. It appears that in 40% of the high schools identified by a majority of their smoking pupils as schools in which people «never» smoke, the percentage of regular smokers stands at 20% compared to 24% for all schools taken together (significant difference at a threshold of 0.05).

Moreover, the figures for the prevalence of regular smoking vary considerably (14% vs. 31%) depending on the vocation of the school (general or technical/vocational education), in spite of all the downward trends.

## Smoking bans and staff smoking

In 2002, according to statements from a majority of staff, it was still possible to smoke in the staff room in 14% of high schools. In 2006, this situation existed in just 2% of high schools (table 3).

The proportion of high schools in which the sole staff room was divided into two areas remains roughly the same (approximately 35%). The percentage of single staff rooms in which a total smoking ban exists rose from 30% to 43% of high schools, an increase of 43%.

**Table 3 - The changing status of the staff room**

More precisely, which situation best describes the staff room in your high school?

	Staff	
	2006	2002
No. of schools	235	87
- We can smoke anywhere in there	2%	14%
- There is a smoking area and a non-smoking area	36%	35%
- We can't smoke in there	43%	30%
- Other case: (for example, several rooms, each with different rules)	2%	2%
Schools with no majority answer	17%	18%

Source OFDT/IOD

The number of high schools in which tobacco use by staff fell back due to the new rules is difficult to estimate. The proportion of high schools in which a majority of staff who smoke declared that they «never» smoked within the high school premises remained virtually identical between 2002 (19%) and 2006 (18%). The percentage of schools in which smoking is totally forbidden for staff is believed to be a minimum of 11% (according to the majority of replies to a question asked of all staff), and a maximum of 18% (if we only take account of statements from staff who smoke). Nevertheless, the variety and complexity of working areas and hours for staff mean that no reply can concern the entire perimeter of the high school at any given time and therefore, no such reply can be anything more than hypothetical in nature. Proof of this is provided by the considerable variations (a ratio of 1:2) in the responses given concerning the existence of «smokers' rooms» depending on whether the question was asked of principals or staff.

As already seen with the pupils, the formal establishment of «smoking areas» has reduced the number of high schools in which the right to smoke for staff members was considered implicit, and smoking habits more or less diffuse. In 2002, the principals declared (with this being confirmed by the staff) that areas existed which were «expressly» reserved for staff who smoke in 65% of high schools. In 2006, based on further corresponding declarations, this situation was declared to be true in 80% of high schools.

If, (apart from the status of the staff room) regulatory changes in smoking by staff are dif-

ficult to assess, for its part the prevalence of smoking has significantly declined over four years. In the respective samples from 2002 and 2006, the prevalence of regular smokers fell from 24% to 20%. On the other hand, unlike the trends witnessed with pupils, those who smoke more than five cigarettes a day now account for a slightly higher proportion of regular smokers (73% vs. 70%).

As for the pupils, it appears that the specific site rules have an effect on the prevalence of smoking among staff. In the 18% of high schools identified by a majority of their smoking staff as schools in which people «never» smoke, the percentage of regular smokers was 14% vs. 20% for all schools taken together (significant difference).

## Observance of the bans and the situation outside the school gates

In 2006, in 43% (according to staff) or 44% (according to pupils) of high schools, the «non-smoking areas» appeared to be totally observed by pupils. The number of high schools included in this category has therefore considerably increased since 2002 (from 53% and from 83% respectively). Already a tiny minority in 2002, the number of high schools in which infringements were frequent had fallen even further in 2006. This change is concurrent with the growth of non-smoking areas, whether this concerns a total ban or the provision of an authorised smoking area to the exclusion of other areas.

Observations made concerning infringements by adults reveal similar trends, though less spectacular due to the fact that the earlier level was already low.

The majority view of both staff and pupils considers that there has been a major decrease in the «large number» of smokers gathered outside, in front of the schools. This description falls from 83% of high schools (the majority view of pupils in 2002) and 70% (the majority view of staff) to 38% and 24% respectively. These figures fly in the face of the generally held belief that smokers have now

moved in droves to the outside areas around the high schools. The number of «instructions to avoid smoking immediately outside the school premises» has increased, and has no doubt contributed to the above-mentioned results. However, their effects on the group of high schools in which the number of smokers seen immediately outside the school premises is «low» remain imperceptible (2% of schools in 2006 as in 2002).

## Awareness of the law and pupils' adherence to it

In 4 years, awareness of the Evin law has considerably increased. In 2002, 52% of high school pupils had heard of it compared to 75% in 2006. Pupils' adherence to the law remains high, although less so than previously. Despite the fall in the proportion of smokers (44% of smokers in 2002 compared to 35% four years later), it has been noted that the percentage of high school pupils stating that they generally agree with the law has fallen by three percentage points (from 82% to 79%). It is likely that some of these pupils became aware of the law as a result of the restrictive measures recently adopted by a large number of high schools.

Furthermore, we are seeing a strengthening of the relationship between the smoker-status of pupils and their disapproval of the law. The overall stability in the acceptance level of the law by non-smokers (10% of non-smokers stated that they disagreed with the law and approximately 88% agreed with it in both 2006 and 2002) contrasts sharply with far firmer resistance on the part of smokers: the total number of smokers stating that they disagree with the law rose by 13 percentage points between 2002 and 2006. Though fewer in number, the smokers in 2006 appeared on average to be more «radical» than those in 2002.

**Table 4 - The position of pupils vis-à-vis the Evin law - Details by smoking status**

Do you agree with this law?

	Smokers		Non-smokers	
	2006	2002	2006	2002
No. of replies	3,103	1,546	6,373	2,025
Total in agreement	62%	74%	87%	88%
Total in disagreement	37%	24%	10%	10%
No reply/Don't know	1%	1%	2%	2%

Source OFDT/IOD

## The stability of educational activities between 2002 and 2006

It would seem that over the last four years, the cultural environment surrounding tobacco has evolved, with greater consideration today being given to the rights of non-smokers in addition to health risks. Overall, the results of the OFDT survey highlight this change. Today, we are witnessing a higher level of awareness of the law (in 2002, 52% of high school pupils had heard of it compared to 75% in 2006), the regulations are better observed (the key data has already been mentioned), pupils have a better opinion of the role played by adults when it comes to setting an example (a threefold increase over the space of four years), the prevalence of smoking among the high school pupils surveyed has fallen (from 44% of daily or occasional smokers in 2002 to 35% in 2006), etc. However, where the high schools are concerned, the frequency of information or prevention campaigns has remained at a level identical to that of 2002. In both 2006 and 2002, only one pupil in five was able to remember the smoking prevention actions carried out at the high school the previous year.

## Difficulties in applying the law

In 2002, more than 6 headmasters out of 10 reported difficulties in applying the law. This situation improved favourably as in 2006 only 42% of them considered that it was «very» or «fairly» difficult to apply. This change has been confirmed by statements made by staff. The percentage of schools in which a majority of the staff consider that it is difficult to apply the law has significantly decreased, from 37% in 2002 to 17% in 2006.

This overall trend characterised by the changing opinion of staff who are today less pessimistic, should be considered against the backdrop of an increase in the number of high schools in which no majority position emerges from the replies. Although staff appears less decisive in 2006 than in 2002, the situation almost certainly reflects a trend towards less pessimistic general opinions concerning the possibility of applying the law at school.

**Table 5 – The difficulty experienced in applying the provisions of the Evin law**

Would you say that in your high school the application of the measures of the Evin anti-tobacco law is “Very difficult (...) very easy”?

	Principals		Staff	
	2006	2002	2006	2002
No. of schools	235	86	235	87
Total difficult	42%	62%	17%	37%
Total easy	57%	38%	54%	49%
No reply	1%	-	-	1%
Schools without majority replies	-	-	29%	13%

Source OFDT/IOD

## Conclusions

It was somewhat risky to carry out a longitudinal analysis of the situation in the French high schools by launching a second wave of surveys just four years after the first. However, this short period saw a number of specific landmark

events (the Cancer Prevention Plan launched in April 2003 and the price increases for tobacco in 2003 and 2004, etc.). Similarly, the first assessment carried out by the OFDT made it possible to objectify the extent to which these schools were lagging behind with regard to the application of the public health laws, and stressed the urgency and necessity of change. Consequently, it was to be hoped that the various key players would participate more enthusiastically.

The results have largely confirmed the appropriateness of the chosen interval between these two surveys.

Firstly, the total smoking bans imposed on pupils and combined with satisfactory application levels were introduced in larger numbers during the last four years than they had been at any time since the decree of 1977 (the Veil law) or that of 1992 (the Evin law). Secondly, those high schools wishing to allow people to smoke within their premises have almost all declared that this right is regulated, resulting in the establishment of «smoking areas». This has led to an increase in the proportion of high schools providing at least one «smoking area» for pupils.

It is likely that the success achieved in eradicating or reducing the presence of tobacco in high schools is to a large extent a generational effect. Indeed, it takes just two years for a majority of pupils to arrive in a new environment and adapt. The rapid reduction in prevalence levels from one generation to the next one is clearly conducive to this phenomenon. However, the speed at which high school staff is able to adapt is not aided by this same generational renewal effect, despite the modest progress achieved. Regulatory measures and the general reduction in the prevalence of smoking among juveniles are intensifying, with the result being that smoking at high school is now a minority phenomenon. Additionally, it is particularly interesting to note the specific local effect of bans on the prevalence of young regular smokers.

The survey was carried out involving a representative sample of high schools in continental mainland France. It was organised in 50 départements, with two départements selected at random for each education authority. The final sample of 235 high schools was finally arrived at after 320 schools were drawn at random from a total of 3,792 units broken down according to the following variables: «urban size, type and size of the high schools, and public/private status». In each high school, the principal, 10 members of staff drawn at random from among those present on the day of the survey and pupils from two full classes drawn at random were interviewed. The identification of the two classes and the staff members to be interviewed in each school selected was carried out on a random basis according to route sampling.

With the exception of underage pupils whose parents had refused the survey in advance, all pupils in the classes drawn at random were interview-

ed on a date agreed in advance with the principal, during a class. Where the staff members were concerned, their selection was carried out on the very day of the interviewer's visit. The questionnaires were self-administered, and were distributed and collected by a researcher from the IOD, the institute given the task of carrying out the survey.

The collection of data was carried out from early March to 24 May 2006, and the exact dates of the start of activities in the field were set in such a way as to take account of the school holidays for each area. As the performance of the survey was delayed by the demonstrations against the «first employment» contract (CPE), the data collection period was extended by three weeks beyond the initially scheduled deadline in order to meet sample size targets. For the same reasons, the reply rate for the schools contacted was 73%.

The survey was approved by the French Data Protection Authority (the CNIL).

## References

Beck (F.), Legleye (S.), Spilka (S.), Les drogues à 17 ans : évolutions, contexte d'usage et prise de risque. *Tendances*, n° 49, 4 p., 2006.

Conseil national de l'évaluation, Commissariat général du Plan (dir.), *La loi relative à la lutte contre le tabagisme et l'alcoolisme : rapport d'évaluation*, Paris, La Documentation française, 2000, 555 p.

Karsenty (S.), Díaz Gómez (C.), *Le tabac en milieu scolaire - Résultats de la première évaluation de la loi Evin dans les écoles, collèges et lycées* (2002), Paris, OFDT, 2003, 164 p.

Karsenty (S.), Maignon (G.), Díaz Gómez (C.), Branellec (T.), *Règles et usages en matière de tabac : évolution 2002-2006 dans les lycées français*, Paris, OFDT, 2006, 79 p. (à paraître)

Roussille (B.), *L'interdiction de fumer dans les lieux accueillant du public en France*, rapport n° 2005 193, Inspection générale des affaires sociales, 2005, 151 p.

Wilquin (J.-L.), « Tabagisme : le recul se confirme », in Guilbert (P.), Gautier (A.) (dir.), *Baromètre santé 2005 ; Premiers résultats*, Editions INPES, 2006.

## Tendances

Chief Editor  
Jean-Michel Costes

### Editorial Committee

Marie-Danièle Barré, Sylvain Dally,  
Alain Epelboin, Jean-Dominique Favre, Claude Got,  
Serge Karsenty, Annette Leclerc, Thomas Rouault

### Editorial Secretary

Julie-Emilie Adès

### Graphic Designer

Frédérique Million

### Printing

Imprimerie Masson / 69, rue de Chabrol  
75010 Paris

ISSN 1295-6910  
Legal publication registration

### French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions

3, avenue du Stade de France  
93218 Saint-Denis La Plaine cedex  
Tél : 01 41 62 77 16  
Fax : 01 41 62 77 00  
e-mail : ofdt@ofdt.fr