

# In a glimpse

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## Psychoactive substances, users and markets in France in 2022

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Since 1999, the Emerging Trends and New Drugs (TREND) scheme of the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (OFDT) has made it possible to describe the populations that are particularly dependent on psychoactive substances and to identify emerging phenomena in the field of illicit drugs and diverted medicines. The scheme's observations relating to 2022 are presented in issue 160 of *Tendances*, the publication of which accompanies the analyses of local challenges produced by the 9 TREND local coordinators located in Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Metz, Paris, Rennes, Toulouse and Reunion Island.

### Supply and trafficking: home delivery becomes more widespread and marketing techniques more sophisticated

Home delivery of drugs, which had grown significantly during the lockdowns of the Covid-19 health crisis, continues to expand into new areas outside major cities.

Some drug dealers have abandoned their outlets and now only deliver drugs at users' homes. Although some of these outlets remain important, those dismantled by the police often reappear in the surrounding area.

In a highly competitive environment, gaining customer loyalty is a key issue. Traffic networks therefore use marketing techniques such as promotional campaigns with discounted offers and gifts, promoted by video montages or photos on social networks.

With regard to changes in the actors involved in trafficking, the presence of women in delivery jobs, for which the risk of police control is lower, seems to have increased in recent years. The presence of minors, sometimes under the age of 15 and not from the neighbourhood where the dealing point is located, as lookouts or dealers, has also increased.

### Marginalised users: focus on migrant populations and pregabalin (Lyrica®) use

Three groups, diverse in terms of geographical and cultural origins and drug use, are described in particular.

- People mainly from Georgia (more rarely from Moldova, Bulgaria, and the Baltic States) whose drug use is centred on injecting opioids (mainly heroin and methadone), sometimes combined with cocaine or medication.
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- People from the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), who mainly use heroin.
- People from sub-Saharan Africa (Guinea, Somalia, Eritrea, Gambia, and Sudan), and the Maghreb, including unaccompanied minors, who use alcohol and prescription drugs (Valium®, Tramadol® and Lyrica®) and sometimes crack cocaine.

Most of these people are men under the age of 40, and all share a poor state of physical and psychological health, linked to their difficult migration history, their precarious living conditions in France, and their poor access to health services.

Pregabalin (Lyrica®) is prescribed for neuropathic pain, epilepsy, and certain anxiety disorders. Outside the scope of these medical indications, this substance can be misused by people seeking its psychoactive effects.

The rise in the number of people addicted to pregabalin and the extent of the resulting health damage were of great concern to professionals working in social and health facilities in 2022. Many of them were seeking advice concerning harm and risk reduction and the management of withdrawal symptoms.

### **“Pink cocaine” and “Tucibi”: the misleading name of a mixture of different psychoactive substances**

From autumn 2022 onwards, some TREND coordinating sites collected information on pink-coloured powders of varying designations: “Tucibi”<sup>1</sup>, “pink cocaine” or, more rarely, “tussi” or “Chinese coke”.

Contrary to what these names suggest, the product contains neither cocaine nor 2-CB<sup>2</sup>. It is a mixture of other psychoactive substances, most commonly ketamine and MDMA (“ecstasy”). People who have tried it report hallucinogenic and stimulant effect of fluctuating intensity.

The varying composition of these powders and their misleading names have led some associations to develop appropriate prevention and harm reduction messages. These include informing users about the presence of ketamine in most pink powders and the associated risks.

### **Further reading (in French)**

Tendances no.160, <https://www.ofdt.fr/BDD/publications/docs/efxcg2dc.pdf> [Psychoactive substances, users and markets in France in 2022], 8 p.

The [TREND scheme presentation](#) leaflet

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<sup>1</sup> This is the English pronunciation of 2-CB.

<sup>2</sup> 2-CB is 4-Bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine, a hallucinogen belonging to the phenethylamine family and classified as a narcotic in 1998.