

In a glimpse

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Drug use in prison - Results of the 2023 ESSPRI survey

The French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addition (OFDT) presents the results of its 2023 Survey on Health and Substances in Prison (ESSPRI) and provides an analysis of trends observed. It is the first statistical survey to estimate the use of the seven most commonly used psychoactive substances in France.

Long-awaited, this first edition of the ESSPRI survey confirms a well-known situation within the scientific community: both the use of prohibited products in prison, such as cannabis, and the use permitted within a closed institution, such as that of tobacco, significantly exceed the levels observed within the general population.

For example, the daily smoking percentage in prison is 63%, which is 2.5 times higher than on the outside. Similarly, more than a quarter of prisoners use cannabis on a daily basis (26%), representing a prevalence of daily cannabis use 8 times higher than that within the general population. This significant exposure to psychoactive substances is partly due to continuity of use: the vast majority of those who use in prison claim to have in fact already used considerably prior to their imprisonment.

The use of other substances is lower, or even marginal - the use of an illicit drug other than cannabis (cocaine, crack, MDMA, heroin) during imprisonment only concerns 1 in 10 inmates.

For the 2023 survey, a representative sample of 1 094 adult men imprisoned for more than three months in Metropolitan France (across all types of institutions) were interviewed. Women only represent 4% of the prison population, a pilot study has been developed with a sample of female prisoners, the results of which will be presented in a next edition, scheduled for 2025. As such, ESSPRI aims to join the major public statistical surveys and provide routine data on the development of drug use in prison.

Further reading (in French)

Tendances: [Les consommations de drogues en prison – Résultats de l'enquête ESSPRI 2023](#) [Drug use in prison - Results of the 2023 ESSPRI survey] 6 p.
