

Cannabis, Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs in late teens : Level of use and latest evolutions, 2003 ESCAPAD Survey

The 2003 ESCAPAD Survey stands for the fourth édition of this investigation carried out among teenagers attending their JAPD (*Journée d'appel de préparation à la Défense*; Roll Call Day). On the basis of a self-managed and strictly anonymous questionnaire, this study grants the opportunity to have an update of the psychoactive substances levels of use among 17-18 year-olds and to expound the recent evolutions of such practices in late teens. These data add to the system set up by the OFDT in order to monitor the uses among an adult population (*Le Baromètre santé*, the Health Indicator, supervised by the INPES in collaboration with other partners), and in school population (ESPAD, in partnership with the INSERM). ESCAPAD and ESPAD go together as far as the ages, as well as the geographical and school contexts are concerned. In its French version, ESPAD actually queries the pupils belonging to every grade of secondary school from 12 to 18 year-olds, and the survey is identically carried out in more than thirty European countries. That is why international comparisons between the whole substances will be possible from the end of 2004 onwards. For its part, the 2003 ESCAPAD survey also interviews individuals who no longer attend school after 16; it not only covers metropolitan France but also the *DOM* (overseas departments), which is unusual, and for the first time this year the *TOM* (overseas territories), following the same methodology. The purpose here is to display major tendencies which emerge from this study, as well as the findings of certain investigations carried out during its analysis: upon the teenagers' expenses covering the purchases of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis. ESCAPAD also helps updating the estimate of individuals involved in different uses of psychoactive substances among the 12-75 year-olds.

Experimentation implies having already used a substance at least once during one's lifetime. Other use indicators entail last thirty days: recent use (at least once), regular use of alcohol or cannabis (at least 10 times), daily use (at least once a day). Even if they result from a rational choice, these thresholds are inevitably arbitrary as well as they do not demonstrate the variety of use patterns and poorly discriminate some much dissimilar facts.

Recent uses of psychoactive substances at 17-18

During last 30 days, alcohol appears to be the substance more used (eight teenagers out of ten) than tobacco (about one half of the teenagers declare themselves smokers, girls in the same proportion as boys). For its part, the recent use of cannabis relates to one third of the 17-18 year-olds, and the use of psychotropic pharmaceuticals involves a little more than one youth out of ten. The levels of use of illicit substances other than cannabis prove very low. Experimenting

such substances remains an uncommon behaviour and using them regularly even more, as it hardly involves one teenager out of a hundred, with the exception of ecstasy (besides nearly one half of such uses during the month are the only ones ever known by those individuals).

Psychoactive Use Within a Month at 17-18 (%)

	Last 30 Days		
	Girls	Boys	Both
Alcohol	76.2	84.2	80.2
Tobacco	48.2	47.3	47.7
Cannabis	26.3	37.9	32.3
Medicines	18.0	5.8	11.8
Ecstasy	1.0	2.0	1.6
Mushrooms	0.6	1.4	1.0
Poppers	0.7	1.3	1.0
Amphetamines	0.6	1.2	0.9
Cocaine	0.6	1.2	0.9
Inhalants	0.5	0.9	0.7
LSD	0.3	0.7	0.5
Heroine	0.3	0.5	0.4
Crack	0.2	0.4	0.3

Source : 2003 ESCAPAD Survey, OFDT

Latest evolutions (2000-2003)

The concept of lifetime use, which the 2003 ESCAPAD Report is referring to, proves useful as it highlights the level of distribution of different substances among the population, but it includes teenagers having merely tested or given up their use. It enables a close watch upon the main trends for each substance.

2000-03 Lifetime Use Evolution of Psychoactive Substances by Gender at 17 (%)

	Girls 2000	Girls 2003	Boys 2000	Boys 2003	Total 2000	Total 2003
Alcohol	-	94.0	-	95.3	-	94.6
Tobacco	79.4	79.0	76.0	75.0	77.7	77.0
Intoxication	49.5	47.6	63.3	62.2	56.4	55.0
Cannabis	40.1	47.2***	50.1	53.3**	45.5	50.3***
Psychotropic medicines	29.0	35.5***	10.6	14.3***	19.8	24.7***
Inhalants	3.3	4.0	4.9	4.7	4.1	4.4
Hallucinogenic mushrooms	1.6	2.0	4.5	4.9	3.1	3.5
Poppers	1.3	2.1***	3.4	4.1	2.4	3.3***
Ecstasy	1.4	2.4**	2.8	4.1***	2.1	3.2***
Amphetamines	0.6	1.1*	1.4	2.4***	1.0	1.8***
Cocaine	0.6	1.1*	1.3	2.0	1.0	1.6***
LSD	0.8	0.6	1.6*	1.1	1.2	0.9
Heroin	0.4	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.7	0.8
Crack	0.2	0.5	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.6
Subutex®	-	0.6	-	0.9	-	0.8
Ketamin	-	0.4	-	0.7	-	0.6
GHB	-	0.3	-	0.5	-	0.4

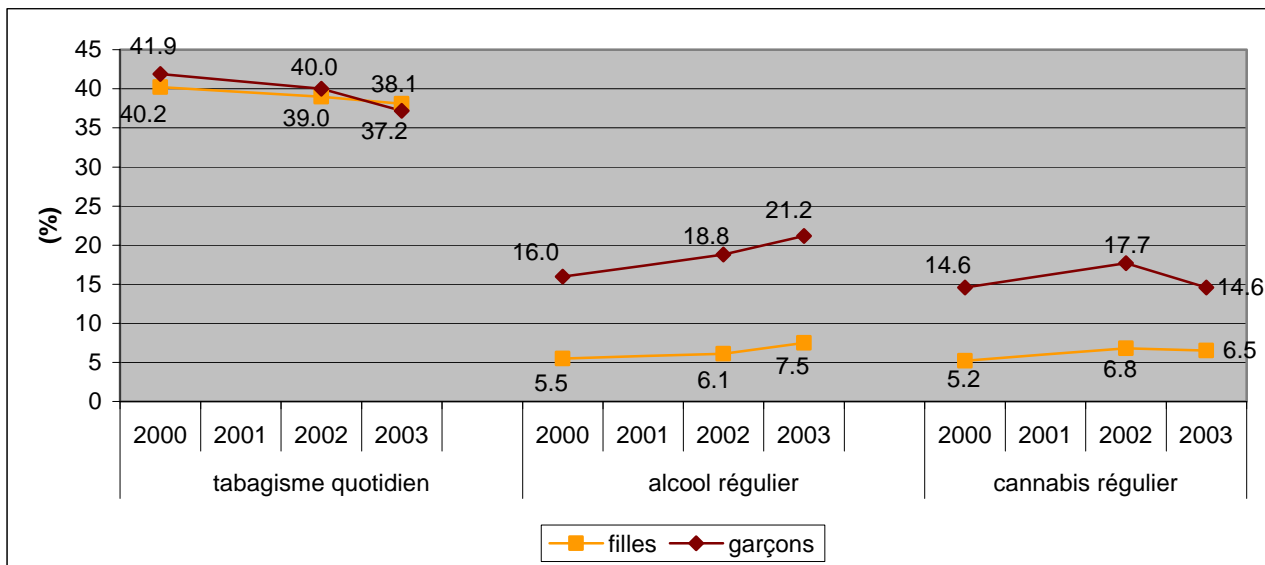
Assessment: *, **, ***: 2000-03 evolution significant at the 0.05, 0.01, 0.001 thresholds; non-marked ratios describe insignirrelevant evolutions at the 0.05 threshold. Ratios in block letters point to significantly higher prevalences.

Source: 2003 ESCAPAD Survey, OFDT.

The levels of experimentation for alcohol and tobacco come out very high yet steady during the 2000-2003 period, and those of psychotropic medicines are clearly increasing. When it comes to cannabis, a slight rise among girls (47.2 % vs. 45.7 %) and a small diminution among boys (53.3 % vs. 54.6 %) can be observed, indicating a slowing down in 2003 after the steady increase being detected since the early 1990's. This one appears while France is standing at the top of the European countries for cannabis experimentation since the late 1990's. Regarding other psychoactive substances, slight

increases can be perceived for some substances (poppers, ecstasy, amphetamines and cocaine) between 2000 and 2003. Other substances did not show a noteworthy evolution during that period. In comparison with earlier surveys, three new substances, uncommon yet having received special media coverage these last years, were queried upon. They include ketamine, Subutex®¹ (high dosage buprenorphine haut dosage) and GHB. Those appear to be hardly ever tested by teenagers, yet it is otherwise known that such substances are likely to be used by older youngsters.

2000-03 Evolution of the Regular Level of Use⁽¹⁾ for Tobacco, Alcohol and Cannabis by Gender, at 17 (%)



(1) Use including 10 times at least during last thirty days for alcohol and cannabis; daily use for tobacco.

Source: 2003 ESCAPAD Survey, OFDT.

As far as regular uses are concerned, the decrease in the daily use of tobacco is confirmed, especially among boys for which it proves very significant. Recurring rises in tobacco prices truly seemed to have been a factor of such a downturn. The alcohol regular use is increasing (while the ratio of teenagers acknowledging regular intoxications has not changed). Though it has increased between 2000 and 2002, the cannabis regular use picks up his 2000 level in 2003 and proves steady between 2002 and 2003 among girls. Henceforth it appears as frequent as the alcohol use among girls. On the other hand the regular alcohol use among boys is now upper than the one concerning cannabis. It should be noted that the regular use of psychotropic medicines is slightly increasing (from 2.6 % in 2000 to 4.5 % in 2003), that way enlarging the gap between girls and boys, for whom such behaviour remains marginal (1 % over the whole period).

¹ Subutex® is a medicine prescribed as a substitute for opiates. It is sometimes used regardless of any therapeutic agreement.

The query about the contexts of cannabis use shows that the latter mostly happen at the weekend (when their intensity reaches its peak). Otherwise there is a strong connection between frequency and intensity of use. At 17-18 about 45 % of the regular users admit having smoked at least three joints last time they did it, against more than 60 % of daily users.

Updating the estimate of the amount of psychoactive users among the 12-75 year-olds.

The 2003 ESCAPAD Survey presents the most recent data enabling an update of the estimate of the amount of French individuals involved in the different uses of psychoactive substances:

Table XX : Estimate of the amount of metropolitan French users of psychoactive substances among the 12-75 year-olds.

	Alcohol	Tobacco	Psychotropic Medicines	Cannabis	Heroin	Cocaine	Ecstasy
Experimenters	44.4 M	36.6 M	//	10.9 M	400,000	950,000	450,000
Occasional Users	38.6 M	14.2 M	8.3M	4.2 M	//	150,000	150,000
Regular Users	13.1 M	13 M	3.8 M	850,000	//	//	//
Daily Users	7.8 M	13 M	2.4 M	450,000	//	//	//

Source: 2003 ESCAPAD Survey, OFDT; 2003 ESPAD Survey, INSERM/OFDJ/MJENR; 2002 EROPP Survey, OFDT; 2000 Baromètre Santé, INPES, OFDT treatment.

//: unavailable

- Experimenters: individuals declaring having used psychoactive substances at least once in their lifetime.
- Occasional users: yearly users (apart from current smokers)
- Regular users: at least three incidences of alcohol uses per week, daily tobacco use, weekly use of sleeping pills or tranquillizers, ten incidences of cannabis use per month
- Daily users: daily use (apart from medicines: « daily or nearly daily » use per month)

NB : In 2001 the amount of the 12-75 year-olds is close to 46 millions.

As these figures only give a **estimation**, they must be then considered as a focal point. A margin of error does remain even if it proves realistic. For example: “10.9 millions of cannabis experimenters” means that the amount of experimenters is likely to be found between 10.4 and 11.4 millions.

Expenses assigned to alcohol, tobacco and cannabis

For the first time this survey has turned out an estimate of the expenses recently assigned to the purchase of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis. Results must be read with care as this specific work remains tentative and only aims at giving a ballpark figure as far the amount of expenses is concerned. In 2001 the ESCAPAD Survey already enabled to show that boys, who are more regular users than girls, also take care more often of the purchase of alcohol or cannabis. The 2003 ESCAPAD Survey demonstrates that they also acknowledge more important expenses, even with similar use frequency: some part of this disparity probably issues from gifts or uses in cheerful group events when substances are shared.

In 2003 the amounts spent by girls and boys for purchasing their monthly tobacco expenditure would average 8 € per month for occasional smokers, 58 € for daily smokers, and 88 € for individuals smoking more than ten cigarettes a day. As for alcohol sums would be from around 26 € per month, for occasional drinkers during a month, to 65 € for regular drinkers, then to almost 130 € for boys declaring a daily use of alcohol. Eventually when it comes to cannabis, sums vary from 27 € among occasional users during a month, to 54 € among regular users, then to nearly 80 € among daily users.

According to the assumptions retained, the monthly sums spent in 2003 by the 17-18 year-olds altogether would then be located between 26 and 42 M€ (million of Euros) for alcohol, between 35 and 53 M€ for tobacco, and between 12 and 21 M€ for cannabis. When considering the average of low and high estimates, the whole of teenagers that age would spend a monthly sum close to 94 € for their use of these three substances.

Uses in Overseas Departments & Territories

The ratios observed in La Réunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique², for various levels of use of tobacco, alcohol and cannabis always prove very clearly lower than those measured in metropolitan France, with frequent disparities of around 20 points. The use of psychotropic medicines is also lower in Guadeloupe and Martinique, but not in La Réunion where the level of experimentation is steady and close to the one of metropolitan France. At 18 the uses of other psychoactive substances are very seldom in overseas departments.

Some disparities also occur between the three overseas departments being surveyed, and confirm those observed in 2001 and 2002. The daily tobacco use is clearly more frequent in la Réunion, the recent and regular uses of alcohol are more extensive in the West Indies, and more particularly in Martinique, even though intoxications slightly occur less frequently in those two departments than in la Réunion. Cannabis experimentations and recent uses also prove more widespread in la Réunion.

Additionally the 2003 period gives the opportunity to get hold of some trends: when compared with 2002 figures, the uses of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis mostly increase in the three overseas departments, whereas the decrease of some of these uses in metropolitan France also plays a part in reducing their gaps with overseas departments. The daily tobacco use shows a 2 or 3 point evolution in Martinique and L Réunion, but a slight diminution in Guadeloupe; the alcohol regular use scores a 2 point evolution in the three overseas departments; finally the regular use of cannabis boosts a 4 point rise in Guadeloupe and la Réunion, yet remains steady in Martinique.

² In French Guyana were too small an amount of individuals taking part in the survey that year for a reliable statistical treatment.

The 2003 ESCAPAD Survey gives for the first time the opportunity to scrutinize the uses of psychoactive substances in two overseas territories: New Caledonia and French Polynesia.

Most of the uses of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis acknowledged in New Caledonia prove slightly inferior to those measured in French Polynesia, aside from the tobacco uses and the intoxications, whose frequency is similar in both territories. When compared to metropolitan France, the level of tobacco use proves nearly as prevalent, the recent alcohol uses more unusual, especially among boys, while intoxications are just as frequent. The experimentation level of cannabis may match the one observed in metropolitan France in both territories, yet their regular uses are slightly less common, particularly among girls, and the disparities between genders more significant. In the end, when still compared with metropolitan France, experimenting other psychoactive substances appears to measure up to the level of French Polynesia, while of a lesser degree in new Caledonia. The findings observed in the overseas territories will have to be validated by upcoming surveys, particularly for French Polynesia whose sampling is quite insignificant (n=354).

Uses of Tobacco, Alcohol and Cannabis Among 18 Year-Olds Interviewed in the French Overseas Departments and Territories (ratios on lines)

	Tobacco		Alcohol		Cannabis	
	Experimentation	Daily Use	Experimentation	Regular Use	Experimentation	Regular Use
Réunion	71 %	26 %	90 %	5 %	41 %	7 %
Guadeloupe	64 %	11 %	95 %	7 %	32 %	7 %
Martinique	63 %	12 %	95 %	7 %	31 %	3 %
New Caledonia	78 %	39 %	91 %	8 %	51 %	8 %
French Polynesia	76 %	36 %	90 %	11 %	47 %	9 %
<i>Metropolitan France</i>	78 %	42 %	92 %	14 %	55 %	15 %

*The amount of individuals in French Guiana is not significant enough for analysis; in the overseas territories, the age bracket is 17-18.

Source: 2003 ESCAPAD Survey, OFDT.

Conclusion

This new ESCAPAD Survey enables to follow up a number of evolutions already observed between 2000 and 2003. Over the whole 2000 and 2003 period, an obvious decrease can be notably detected in the tobacco use, a rise in the use of alcohol and psychotropic medicines, as well as in cannabis. When compared with 2002 figures, this last evolution on cannabis denotes a recent change in regular uses, particularly among boys. Experimenting other main illicit drugs shows a slight increase (ecstasy, poppers, amphetamines and cocaine). LSD lifetime use seems to decrease a little among boys; on the other hand, the experimentation levels of inhalants, hallucinogenic mushrooms, heroine and crack have not changed in relation to those of 2000.

In the report, where these results are detailed, a number of novel thematic analysis are also carried out, such as the influence of precocious uses, an estimate of the expenses devoted to the purchase of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis, an estimate of the amount of cannabis joints smoked in various circumstances, and eventually a comparison among the behaviours of teenagers using alcohol, tobacco and cannabis, according to their school background.

At the beginning of year 2005, two editions will help to complete the analysis achieved on a national level. Primarily a publication will present the 2002-2003 ESCAPAD data by region, then a specific analysis carried out only by the city of Paris in 2004 will allow for the first time a quantitative observation upon young Parisians.

Methodological references

The ESCAPAD Survey is carried out through the help of the DCSN (*Direction centrale du Service National*; National Service Central Administration) during the JAPD (*Journée d'appel de préparation à la défense*; Roll Call Day) that replaces National Service from now on. Once a year all over France teenagers attending that day fill out a self-managed and anonymous questionnaire focusing upon their uses of licit or illicit psychoactive substances. This year that was the case for 21,151 young people: 15,710 of them in metropolitan France, 4,138 in the overseas departments, and for the first time 1,303 youth living in the Pacific French overseas territories (New Caledonia and French Polynesia). These 17-18 year-olds are French citizens and mostly still attending a secondary school, however some of them are working, apprentices or going to a university.

The dates of the survey (May 10th and 14th, 2003) were chosen in order to avoid school exams and other circumstances likely to alter the sampling, and to leave one year between this survey and the last one for reliable comparisons in time. The submission was entrusted to one of both contributors supervising the conscripts. He was to present the survey (reminding the conscripts the anonymity of the questionnaire, the value of such a study, and the requirement to obtain accurate and reliable answers) then pass the questionnaires around. Twenty-five minutes later, he would write a submission report describing the proceedings of the survey then pick up the forms. The summoning process of the JAPD secures an excellent privacy because it reduces the risks that young people living in a similar location should find themselves together in the same room. In order to erase disparities between both during submission, the questionnaire is designed to be filled out in as much time for a user as for a non-user.

The contribution ratio of the JAPD is about 90 %, yet we know that such a figure (number of individuals attending vs. number of individuals summoned) remains below reality: as the conscripts are called upon at various dates, they get many opportunities to normalize their situations should they not come to their first summons. Therefore the JAPD is almost mandatory: the interviewees are given a certificate whose presentation is needed when registering at exams or official controls (driving licence, baccalauréat, university exams, etc.).

The ESCAPAD Survey has been granted suitability by the CNIS (*Conseil national de l'information statistique*; National Commission of Statistical Information) and the guarantee of general interest of public statistics from the Label Commission, as well as the approving notice from the CNIL (*Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés*, National Commission on Data Processing and Individual Rights).

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For more information:

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