

Gender differences in drug use in France: a matter of social status?

Objectives

Gender disparity in drug use is well known, but there are few studies comparing the influence of social status on drug use between genders. The present study assesses gender disparities in alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use among 18-25 and 26-54 years old french people. Discussion is whether the differences were mediated by economic status (students, unemployed, and economical active and non active people), level of education, and type of job among economical active people..

Design and method

The sample included 20,159 subjects aged 18-54 years, randomly selected in a national representative telephone survey in 2005. Global participation rate was 58% among classical phones and 57% among mobile phones. Subjects answered a questionnaire about work, health, sport activities and drug use. Data were analyzed through logistic regressions. We describe economical status according to age (18-25 years old : active people, unemployed people, students; 26-54 years old : active people, unemployed people, inactive people). We also use a six categories classification of job for active people.

Results

Except for psychotropic medicine, men have much higher prevalences of psychoactive substances use. Tobacco daily use prevalences are relatively close in both genders.

Table 1 : Use of psychoactive substances among 15-64 years old by gender (%)

	Men	Women	Total	Gender ratio
Tobacco daily use	33,5	25,6	29,5	1,3***
Alcohol regular use	28,6	9,7	18,9	3,0***
Psychotropic medicine (year)	13,8	24,3	19,3	0,6***
Cannabis regular use	4,2	1,2	2,7	3,5***

Regular use means at least ten uses during last 30 days. Source : Baromètre santé 2005, INPES

Compared to active people, prevalences among unemployed or inactive people tend to be higher. Prevalences among students are somewhat lower among men, but higher among women (Table 2). As a result, gender ratios are lower among students and active people than unemployed people.

Table 2 : Odds ratios for economical situation among men (M), women (W) and gender ratio in each category (G), adjusted on age

	Alcohol regular			Drunk during year			Tobacco daily			Psychotropic medicine			Cannabis during year			Cannabis regular		
	M	W	G	M	W	G	M	W	G	M	W	G	M	W	G	M	W	G
18-25 years old																		
Active people (Ref)	-1-	-1-	7,3	-1-	-1-	3,6	-1-	-1-	1,9	-1-	-1-	0,4	-1-	-1-	2,5	-1-	-1-	2,8
Students	0,6	1,3	4,0	1,0	1,4	3,1	0,4	0,6	0,7	1,6	1,3	0,6	1,1	1,5	2,4	0,8	1,0	2,2
Unemployed	0,6	1,2	4,2	0,9	0,8	3,1	1,3	1,2	2,4	2,3	1,8	0,9	1,0	0,9	2,5	1,6	0,9	4,3
26-54 years old																		
Active people (Ref)	-1-	-1-	4,4	-1-	-1-	4,4	-1-	-1-	1,3	-1-	-1-	0,5	-1-	-1-	2,6	-1-	-1-	3,8
Unemployed	1,2	1,2	5,4	1,3	1,1	5,6	2,0	1,7	2,6	1,9	1,2	0,9	2,4	1,4	6,3	3,1	3,0	11,9
Inactive people	0,9	1,1	3,9	0,8	0,7	3,4	2,0	1,1	2,6	5,0	1,0	2,2	1,2	0,8	3,0	1,6	1,2	6,2

In bold : OR significantly different from 1. Source : Baromètre santé 2005, INPES

Table 3 : Odds ratios for type of job and level of diploma among men (M), women (W) and gender ratio in each category (G), adjusted on age

	Alcohol regular			Drunk during year			Tobacco daily			Psychotropic medicine			Cannabis during year			Cannabis regular		
	M	W	G	M	W	G	M	W	G	M	W	G	M	W	G	M	W	G
Active people																		
Workmen (Ref)	-1-	-1-	6,4	-1-	-1-	6,2	-1-	-1-	1,5	-1-	-1-	0,5	-1-	-1-	2,8	-1-	-1-	5,8
Farmers	1,7	2,1	5,1	0,7	1,2	4,2	0,3	0,1	3,7	0,3	0,3	0,2	0,6	0,5	3,6	0,5	3,9	0,9
Craftsmen	1	2,1	3,1	0,8	1,5	3,5	0,8	1,1	1,1	0,7	1,0	0,3	1,3	2,1	1,7	0,9	3,1	1,7
Managers	0,9	1,8	3,0	0,8	1,6	3,2	0,4	0,6	1,1	1,1	0,9	0,6	1,2	1,3	2,5	0,6	1,8	2,1
Intermediate employees	0,9	1,3	4,4	0,9	1,3	4,3	0,6	0,6	1,5	0,9	1,0	0,5	1,1	1,1	2,9	0,9	1	5,5
Diploma																		
<Bac (reference)	-1-	-1-	5,5	-1-	-1-	4,8	-1-	-1-	1,5	-1-	-1-	0,5	-1-	-1-	3,0	-1-	-1-	5,1
Bac	0,9	1,4	4,1	1,0	1,2	4,1	0,7	0,7	1,3	0,9	1,1	0,4	1,0	1,3	2,3	0,7	1,4	2,3
>Bac	0,9	1,7	3,2	1,0	1,4	3,4	0,6	0,6	1,4	0,9	0,8	0,5	1,2	1,4	2,6	0,6	1,1	2,9

In bold : OR significantly different from 1. Source : Baromètre santé 2005, INPES

Compared to workmen, prevalences among managers tend to be lower among men, but not among women. Besides, prevalences tend to be higher among people with low level of education among men, but the trend is reversed among women for alcohol regular use, drunkenness, and cannabis use during year (Table 3). All these results are still valid when all variables are introduced at the same time in the models.

Discussion

These analysis do not provide any clue for motives for use, neither relationships between working conditions and type of use. Drug uses here include at risk use as well as low risk use.

Conclusion

Social determinants of drug use vary considerably between genders. Unemployed people are at high risk for drug use, especially among men. Women with high social positions tend to drink more alcohol than the other ones, whereas the trend is opposite among men. Differences between men and women are greater for people of low social position than people of high level position. Further research is needed in order to get some information about places of consumption and motives of use. Email : stleg@ofdt.fr