

The prevalence of problem drug use in France : estimates for 2006

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The Prevalence of Problem Drug Use In France: Estimates for 2006

This document describes a method making it possible to produce a new estimate of the number of regular users of opioids, cocaine or amphetamines experiencing major health or social problems due to their drug use.

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Estimating the number of drug users is vital in order to assess treatment requirements. It also provides a realistic basis upon which to measure the social cost of drug problems. This is therefore a vital task for national monitoring centres such as OFDT, the role of which is to provide assistance in public decision-making. Additionally, at a European level, for more than 10 years now the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), which has made this data one of its five key indicators¹, has sought to supply comparable national estimates of the prevalence of the most problematic forms of drug use, which cannot be measured by general population surveys. Since 2005, all countries have been in a position to produce an estimate of the national prevalence of Problem Drug Use (PDU) based on the definition and the methodological guidelines issued by the EMCDDA («injecting drug use or long duration /regular use of opioids, cocaine and/or amphetamines»). Many of these estimates are based on the results from several estimation methods which increases both their comparability and reliability. The most recent data is available in the EMCDDA's annual report. A series of studies and research initiatives have been carried out by the OFDT during recent years in order to draw up a new estimate of the number of problem drug users in France. This estimate, which is based on data from 2006, follows on from those previously drafted in 1995 and 1999. This work also seeks to estimate the number of regular users of heroin in addition to injecting drug users. Accompanied by the relevant methodological notes, this detailed information was presented in the report quoted in the references. In addition to presenting the main results, this issue of Tendances examines changes in this data over time and compares it to that obtained from other European countries.

Material and methods

The European group(s) define the population group covered by the estimate (the target group) and describe the information sources and the various methods available for use. It recommends the use of as many methods as possible in order to be able to compare results.

The target group(s) and the data source(s) used

The operational definition chosen by the EMCDDA for a problem drug user is an individual injecting drugs, using or regular user of opioids, cocaine and/or amphetamines during the year prior to the 15-64 year old age group.

50 separate data sources were used to produce these estimates:

- ILSAD (final addiction information indicators)
- The activity report from the CSSTs (drug addiction treatment centres)
- FNARS (National file of narcotic legislation offences)
- SIAMDES (system of information on the accountability of injection equipment and substitution practices (in Vg))
- Eau-CARREUS (National Survey of low threshold services)
- NEMO (the New Multinational OFDT study into local estimates of problem drug use)


Methods

The authors propose methodological elements. This method combines data obtained from several sources, for example those issued by the health or law enforcement systems. This involves mathematical modelling based on the observation of the presence or absence of drug users included in the survey in each of the various, overlapping, surveys for users of the services and comprising the hidden population which is not identified by any of the sources.

1. General population survey. Problem Drug Use. Document request indicators. Mainly related to drug use. Information sources related to drug use.

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