

# TENDANCES

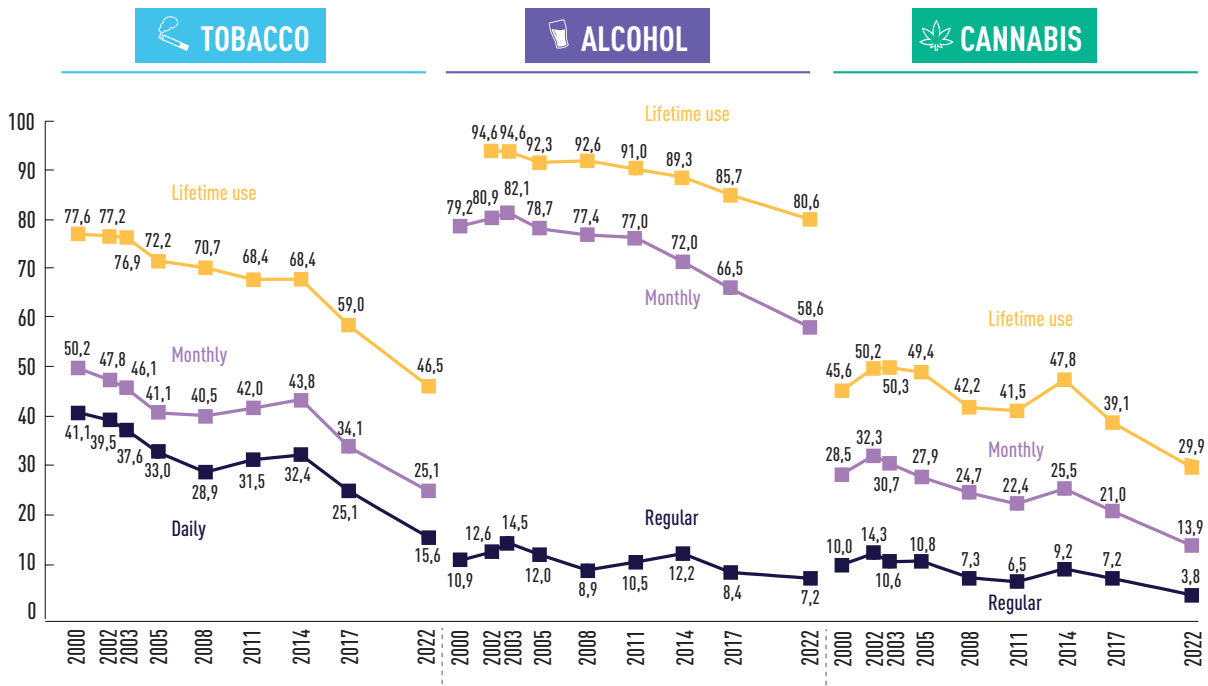
## DRUG USE IN FRENCH 17-YEAR-OLDS ANALYSIS OF THE 2022 ESCAPAD SURVEY

### ABSTRACT

In March 2022, the ESCAPAD survey interviewed a representative sample of 23 701 French girls and boys with an average age of 17.4 years. Since the previous survey in 2017, all levels of drug use have declined, particularly smoking tobacco. A notable exception is the use of electronic cigarettes which is rising sharply, driven by a very marked increase in use among girls. The results confirm the continued increase in the proportion of 17-year-olds who have never drunk alcohol (one in five in 2022), as well as the unfavourable situation of young people in apprenticeships or

those who have left the school system for whom the levels of use are always higher than those of high school students. While the 2022 trends are in line with the decline in the distribution of tobacco, alcohol and cannabis observed over the past decade, it should be remembered that this snapshot comes after two years marked by the health crisis linked to Covid-19. The health indicators in the survey describe a far less encouraging picture in terms of health than drug use, with a deterioration in the mental health of part of the adolescent population in 2022.

Figure 1. Changes in the levels of tobacco (cigarette), alcoholic beverages and cannabis use among 17-year-olds from 2000-2022 (%)



Source: ESCAPAD surveys (metropolitan France), OFDT  
Key: "Regular" use means use at least 10 times in the 30 days prior to the survey  
For a definition of the other use indicators, see the "Main indicators" on page 7.

For the ninth time since the implementation of the ESCAPAD<sup>1</sup> survey, the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (OFDT) and the Youth and National Service Directorate (DSNJ) of the Ministry of the Armed Forces interviewed a sample of 23 701 17-year-olds taking part in the National Defence and Citizenship Day (JDC) in March 2022. Since the first ESCAPAD survey in 2000, more than 260 000 teenagers have been interviewed about their use of legal and illegal psychotropic substances. This survey, unique in terms of its sample size, is a valuable tool for monitoring changes in substance use and addictive behaviours in late adolescence. This issue of Tendances presents the main findings of the most recent survey. It first explores the major changes that have occurred over the past two decades in terms of the three main substances used by teenagers (tobacco, alcohol and cannabis), before addressing other substances less widely used among this age group. The analysis then looks more specifically at the differences in drug use according to educational status. Finally, given the exceptional Covid-19 situation between 2020 and 2021, this issue of Tendances presents the evolution between 2017 and 2022 of certain health indicators in the survey, such as height and weight, self-perceived health, suicide attempts, and symptoms of anxiety/depression.

## Changes in substance use

### Decline in the use of tobacco products

In 2022, less than one in two 17-year-olds said they had smoked at least one cigarette (factory-made or roll-your-own) in their lifetime (46.5%) and 15.6% said they smoked daily. Tobacco use fell sharply between 2017 and 2022, regardless of the frequency of use: both the level of young people who had tried a tobacco product (at least one cigarette in their lifetime) and the level of daily use fell by 13 and 10 points respectively (see Figure 1). This downward trend has been observed since the first ESCAPAD survey in 2000. However, it has not been continuous: after falling between 2000 and 2006, tobacco consumption among 17-year-olds then stagnated or even increased, before declining sharply again since 2014 (Figure 1). These changes in tobacco use are observed in both boys and girls. Although there are still as many girls as boys who have tried cigarettes, daily use, including smoking more than 10 cigarettes per day, remains more common among boys (17.0% vs. 14.2% and 5.0% vs. 2.3%).

Alongside this decline in tobacco smoking, the average ages at which teenagers first smoked a cigarette and became daily smokers have increased. However, the ESCAPAD survey gives the average age of becoming a daily smoker -15.3 years in 2022 compared to 15.1 years in 2017 - only among 17-year-olds (the proportion of young adults first smoking a cigarette or becoming daily smokers later cannot be observed in the survey).

In addition, in 2022, one in three teenagers (33.3%) had already used shisha (also called hookah) at least once in their lifetime, down sharply from 2017 (49.9%). Recent use remains more marked among boys: in 2022, 13.1% of boys had smoked shisha in the month prior to the survey compared to 7.9% of girls (Table 1).

### Sharp increase in e-cigarette use

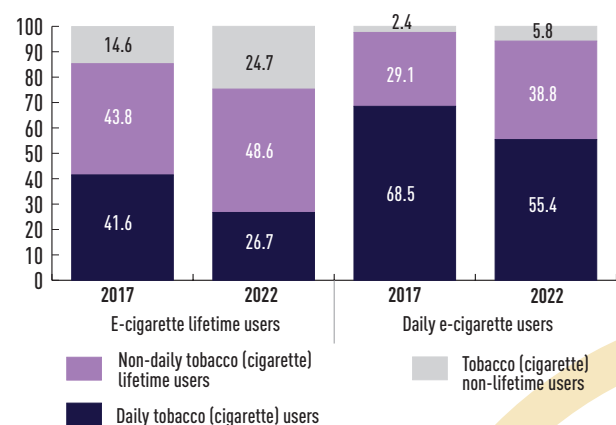
Monitored by ESCAPAD since 2014, the use of electronic cigarettes in 17-year-olds has increased markedly between 2017 and 2022: the proportion of teenagers who have tried an e-cigarette has increased from 52.4% to 56.9% and daily use has tripled, rising from 1.9% to 6.2%. For the first time, the levels of lifetime use, use over the course of a month and daily use of electronic cigarettes have exceeded those of tobacco cigarettes. While the increase applies to both genders, the changes seen among girls are particularly significant: 19 additional points for recent use and a sixfold increase in the level of daily use over this period (6.3% vs. 0.9%).

In this upward context, the age of first trying an e-cigarette has lowered. The average age of first use is now 15.0 years in 2022 compared to 15.4 years in 2017. However, the age of first smoking an electronic cigarette remains later than that of first smoking a tobacco cigarette (+6 months). Smoking cigarettes and vaping continue to be associated: in 2022, 55.4% of daily vapers were also daily smokers of tobacco cigarettes. Nevertheless, the share of exclusive vapers is increasing significantly, with 5.8% of exclusive daily vapers compared to 2.4% in 2017 (Figure 2).

### Decreased consumption of alcoholic beverages

Similar to tobacco, alcohol use among 17-year-olds is characterised by a general decline in all indicators of use. In 2022, nearly one in five teenagers (19.4%) said they had never drunk alcohol in their lifetime. This is an increase of five points compared to 2017 [1], continuing an uninterrupted trend since the first ESCAPAD survey. The decline in the use of alcohol is observed for all indicators: -4.4 points for use in the last 12 months, -7.9 points for use in the last 30 days and -1.2 points (7.2% in 2022 vs. 8.4% in 2017) for regular use (10 or more times per month). At this age, daily alcohol use remains residual (0.9%). Although the numbers of 17-year-olds who have never drunk alcohol are similar for girls (19.7%) and boys (19.1%), the consumption of alcoholic beverages, on the other hand, continues to reflect gender-differentiated behaviours: girls show systematically lower levels than boys, especially as the frequency of alcohol use increases. Girls are half as likely to report drinking 10 or more times per month. Finally, for the first time since the launch of the survey, less than one

Figure 2. Changes in the structure of tobacco (cigarette) use according to the use of e-cigarettes among 17-year-olds between 2017 and 2022 (%)



Interpretation: In 2017, among 17-year-olds that had tried e-cigarettes in their lifetime, 41.5% were also daily tobacco users. In 2022, the respective figure was 26.7%.

Source: 2017 and 2022 ESCAPAD surveys (metropolitan France), OFDT

1. Survey on Health and Substance Use on National Defence and Citizenship Day

Table 1. Levels of psychoactive substance use, by gender, among 17-year-olds in 2022 and changes compared to 2017 (%)

Substance	Use	Boys 2022	Girls 2022	Sex ratio		All 2022	All 2017	Change (in points)	Change (in %)
Tobacco	Lifetime use	46.2	46.9	0.99	ns	<b>46.5</b>	59.0	-12.5	-21 %
	Recent (at least 1 use in the month)	25.5	24.6	1.03	ns	<b>25.1</b>	34.1	-9.0	-26 %
	Daily	17.0	14.2	1.20	***	<b>15.6</b>	25.1	-9.5	-38 %
	Intensive (more than 10 cig./day)	5.0	2.3	2.19	***	<b>3.7</b>	5.2	-1.5	-29 %
Shisha	Lifetime use	37.0	29.3	1.26	***	<b>33.3</b>	49.9	-16.6	-33 %
	Recent (at least 1 use in the month)	13.1	7.9	1.66	***	<b>10.6</b>			
E-cigarette	Lifetime use	57.8	55.9	1.03	**	<b>56.9</b>	52.4	+4.5	+9 %
	Recent (at least 1 use in the month)	29.7	31.8	0.94	***	<b>30.7</b>	16.8	+13.9	+83 %
	Daily	6.0	6.3	0.95	ns	<b>6.2</b>	1.9	+4.3	+226 %
Alcohol	Lifetime use	81.0	80.3	1.01	ns	<b>80.6</b>	85.7	-5.1	-6 %
	Current (at least 1 use in the year)	74.0	72.5	1.02	*	<b>73.3</b>	77.7	-4.4	-6 %
	Recent (at least 1 use in the month)	59.7	57.4	1.04	***	<b>58.6</b>	66.5	-7.9	-12 %
	Regular (at least 10 uses in the month)	9.8	4.4	2.22	***	<b>7.2</b>	8.4	-1.2	-14 %
	Daily	1.4	0.4	3.74	***	<b>0.9</b>	1.3	-0.4	-32 %
Drunken episodes	Lifetime use	47.1	44.7	1.05	***	<b>45.9</b>	50.4	-4.5	-9 %
HED (heavy episodic drinking)	Recent (at least 1 use in the month)	39.0	34.1	1.14	***	<b>36.6</b>	44.0	-7.4	-17 %
	Repeated (at least 3 times in the month)	16.4	10.6	1.54	***	<b>13.6</b>	16.4	-2.8	-17 %
	Regular (at least 10 times in the month)	3.2	1.0	3.20	***	<b>2.1</b>	2.7	-0.6	-21 %
Cannabis	Lifetime use	31.7	28.0	1.13	***	<b>29.9</b>	39.1	-9.2	-24 %
	Current (at least 1 use in the year)	24.8	21.8	1.14	***	<b>23.3</b>	31.3	-8.0	-26 %
	Recent (at least 1 use in the month)	15.5	12.2	1.27	***	<b>13.9</b>	21.0	-7.1	-34 %
	Regular (at least 10 uses in the month)	5.3	2.2	2.41	***	<b>3.8</b>	7.2	-3.4	-47 %
	Daily	2.4	0.9	2.60	***	<b>1.7</b>	3.4	-1.7	-50 %
Other illicit drugs <sup>1</sup>	Lifetime use	4.4	3.4	1.31	***	<b>3.9</b>	6.8	-2.9	-42 %
	In the year: ≥ 1 use	2.5	1.7	1.46	***	<b>2.1</b>	3.8	-1.7	-45 %
<i>MDMA/Ecstasy</i>	Lifetime use	2.1	1.8	1.19	ns	<b>2.0</b>	3.4	-1.4	-41 %
<i>Hallucinogenic mushrooms</i>	Lifetime use	1.4	0.9	1.62	***	<b>1.1</b>	2.8	-1.7	-60 %
<i>Cocaine</i>	Lifetime use	1.5	1.3	1.15	ns	<b>1.4</b>	2.8	-1.4	-49 %
<i>Amphetamines</i>	Lifetime use	1.0	0.8	1.23	ns	<b>0.9</b>	2.3	-1.4	-61 %
<i>LSD</i>	Lifetime use	1.2	0.8	1.59	***	<b>1.0</b>	1.6	-0.6	-37 %
<i>Heroin</i>	Lifetime use	0.5	0.4	1.29	ns	<b>0.4</b>	0.7	-0.3	-40 %
<i>Crack</i>	Lifetime use	0.4	0.3	1.20	ns	<b>0.4</b>	0.6	-0.2	-32 %
<i>Ketamine</i>	Lifetime use	1.1	0.8	1.39	*	<b>0.9</b>			
<i>Lean, Purple Drank</i>	Lifetime use	4.4	2.2	2.06	***	<b>3.3</b>	8.5	-5.2	-61 %
<i>Poppers</i>	Lifetime use	10.9	11.0	0.99	ns	<b>11.0</b>	8.8	+2.2	+25 %
<i>Nitrous oxide</i>	Lifetime use	2.8	1.8	1.54	***	<b>2.3</b>			
<i>Other inhalants (glues, solvents)</i>	Lifetime use	2.1	2.2	0.99	ns	<b>2.1</b>	3.1	-1.0	-32 %

Key: The sex ratio is the ratio of the % among boys to the % among girls.

\*, \*\*, \*\*\*, Chi-squared test significant respectively at 0.05, 0.01, 0.001 for the sex ratio ≠ 1. ns: not significant.

Changes in points and percentages have been specified between 2017 and 2022 when possible (they are all statistically significant).

<sup>1</sup> Lifetime use of at least one of the 8 illicit substances listed.

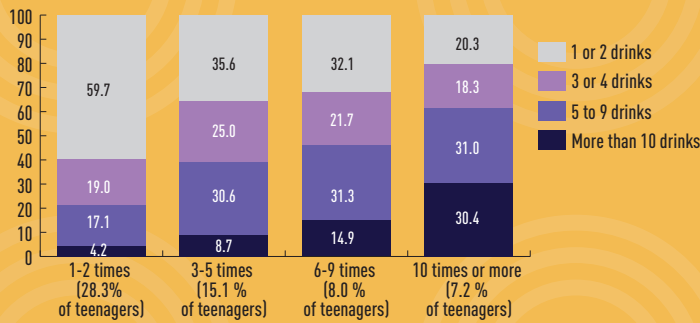
Source: 2017 and 2022 ESCAPAD surveys (metropolitan France), OFDT

## Last alcohol use

Beyond the frequency of alcohol use, we also have intensity indicators. In 2022, 49.4% of young people who had ever drunk alcohol in their lifetime said they had consumed one or two standard drinks (i.e. containing around 10 grams of ethanol) the last time they drank alcohol, while 19.4% drank

3 or 4 drinks, 22.2% drank 5 to 9 drinks and 8.9% drank 10 drinks or more. Boys are twice as likely as girls to have had 10 or more drinks (11.6% vs. 6.2%). In addition, the last time they drank alcohol, a third of young people (31.2%) engaged in heavy episodic drinking (HED).

**Figure 3. Number of standard alcohol drinks consumed during the last alcohol use, according to the frequency of use over the course of the month**



Interpretation: Young people who drank 1-2 times over the course of the month represent 28.3% of 17-year-olds. Among them, 59.7% drank 1 or 2 drinks the last time they drank alcohol, while 4.2% drank 10 drinks or more.

Source: 2022 ESCAPAD survey (metropolitan France), OFDT

The intensity of the last alcohol use is strongly correlated with the frequency of alcohol use (Figure 3): 59.7% of teenagers who drank once or twice over the course of the last month had, on this occasion, consumed 1 to 2 glasses of alcohol. This proportion is reduced to 20.3% among regular drinkers (those who drank at least 10 times over the course of the month). Conversely, nearly half of teenagers (46.2%) who reported having drunk alcohol on between 6 and 9 occasions during the month had, during the last alcohol use, engaged in HED (i.e. consumed at least 5 drinks). This trend, observed in the latest ESCAPAD exercises, cannot hide the spread of HED even among occasional drinkers: HED thus concerns more than one in five teenagers who have drunk once or twice over the course of the month (21.3%), and four teenagers out of ten having drunk 3 to 5 times.

in two teenagers said they had been drunk at least once in their lifetime (45.9%: 47.1% for boys and 44.7% for girls), continuing the decline initiated in 2014.

In 2022, heavy episodic drinking (HED) behaviours (the intake of at least 5 standard glasses of alcohol on a single occasion) are down compared to 2017: a third of 17-year-olds (36.6 vs. 44.0%) engaged in HED at least once over the course of the month, 13.6% (vs. 16.4%) engaged in HED at least three times, and 2.1% (vs. 2.7%) engaged in HED at least 10 times. Once again, HED is more common among boys, especially as its frequency increases over the course of the month. While HED has long been associated with regular alcohol use, it is also observed among non-regular users. This finding suggests that heavy alcohol consumption is becoming a behaviour linked to an adolescent social norm, an initiation rite that is becoming commonplace [2, 3]. In this regard, it should be noted that 10% of 17-year-olds (7.4% of boys vs. 12.4% of girls) have already felt obliged, at least once, to drink alcohol when they "didn't feel like it".

### Declining cannabis use

The decline in cannabis use that began in 2014 has continued, regardless of the frequency of use: In 2022, the numbers of teenagers who had used cannabis in their lifetime is down nearly 10 points compared to 2017 (29.9% vs. 39.1%), use in the last 12 months by 8 points (23.3% vs. 31.3%), and use over the course of the month by 7 points (13.9% vs. 21.0%). Similarly, the levels of regular use (at least 10 times in the last month) and daily use were halved over this period. The differences in levels of use remain significant between girls and boys, with a male predominance that is all the stronger as the frequency of use is high. This decline is mainly observed in boys.

Cannabis is still largely smoked, whether cannabis resin or cannabis herb: 93.6% of current users (at least once over the course of the year) say they smoked a joint the last time they

used cannabis. The survey also confirms that cannabis is still most commonly used in herbal form: 57.1% of current users said they smoked cannabis herb the last time they used the drug, 41.5% resin and 1.4% another form (oil, pollen, etc.). If the predominance of cannabis herb has continued, its use in 2022 nevertheless appears to be down slightly compared to 2017, when two thirds of last uses concerned cannabis herb.

Most teenagers who had tried cannabis also said they had tried tobacco. However, the proportion of 17-year-olds who have tried cannabis without ever having smoked a cigarette tends to increase (6.2% in 2022 vs. 1.8% in 2000). Although remaining marginal, this dissociation of lifetime use of cannabis and tobacco has been accentuated since 2011. It also appears to be more marked among boys (2.5% in 2000 vs. 7.5% in 2022) than among girls (0.8% vs. 4.5% respectively).

The age of first using cannabis is also slightly lower at 15.4 years on average, i.e. almost a year after trying the first cigarette (14.5 years). In view of these elements, it is likely that the decline in cannabis use is largely driven by the decline in and denormalization of smoking tobacco [4].

### Problem cannabis use

The proportion of young people presenting problem cannabis use is assessed through the Cannabis Addiction Screening Test (CAST), offered to those who say they have used cannabis at least once over the course of the year [5].

As a result of the significant decline observed in current use, the share of problem use is also levelling off. In 2022, 1 in 5 current users (21.8%) presented a high risk of problem cannabis use or addiction (i.e. a CAST score  $\geq 7$ ), a lower proportion than in 2017 (24.9%). The risk of problem use ( $3 \leq \text{CAST} \leq 6$ ) concerns 8.6% of all 17-year-olds, compared to 13.6% five years earlier. The risk of addiction has fallen from 7.4% to 4.8% (6.1% of boys and 3.5% of girls).

## Cannabidiol (CBD) use

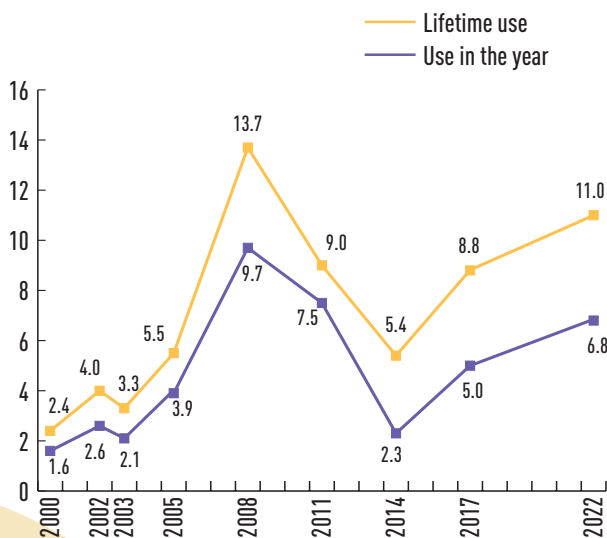
For the first time, the ESCAPAD survey asked questions about experimentation and use over the course of the year of cannabidiol (CBD<sup>2</sup>), which is one of the many cannabinoids present in cannabis (like THC). In 2022, 17.1% of 17-year-olds said they had already tried it and 14.0% had used it in the last 12 months. In both cases, the numbers were slightly higher for boys (15.8% vs. 12.2% of girls for use over the course of the year).

## Other illicit drugs

The levels of use of illicit drugs other than cannabis all show a notable decrease compared to 2017. Among these psychoactive substances, MDMA (ecstasy) remains the most commonly used by 17-year-olds, with a lifetime use rate (having used ecstasy at least once during their lifetime) of 2.0%. It is followed by cocaine (excluding freebase cocaine) at 1.4%, hallucinogenic drugs (LSD, hallucinogenic mushrooms, ketamine), each at around 1%, amphetamines (speed) at 0.9%, and finally heroin and freebase cocaine (crack), each at 0.4% (Table 1).

Overall, between 2017 and 2022, the proportion of young people who had used at least one of the eight substances mentioned in the questionnaire in their lifetime was practically halved (3.9% in 2022 vs. 6.8% in 2017). Similarly, use within the last 12 months has fallen from 3.8% in 2017 to 2.1% in 2022. The number of teenagers claiming to have tried an illicit substance in their lifetime, which had increased continuously between 2000 and 2014, has since continued to decrease despite a dynamic supply in France [6]. With sex ratios of 1.3 for lifetime use and 1.5 for current use (Table 1), this use of illicit substances remains more widespread among boys. The use of LSD and hallucinogenic mushrooms is even more marked by gender.

**Figure 4. Changes in the rates of lifetime use and use in the year of poppers among 17-year-olds between 2000 and 2022**



Source: ESCAPAD surveys (metropolitan France), OFDT

## Diverted psychoactive substance use

The ESCAPAD survey also investigated the use of several other diverted substances: lean (codeine syrup mixed with soda, also called purple drank), nitrous oxide ("laughing gas" contained in small carboys used to make certain food products, whipped cream for example), poppers and other inhalants (glues, solvents such as trichlorethylene).

Among the diverted substances used, only the level of use of poppers is up compared to 2017 (it reached 11.0% for lifetime use and 6.8% for use in the course of the year, vs. 8.8% and 5.0% respectively in 2017), while the use of lean is down, confirming the "fad" around this substance observed in 2017 (Table 1). 2.3% of young people had tried nitrous oxide in their lifetime in 2022 (a question asked for the first time in the survey). The rate of teenagers who had tried other inhalants in their lifetime was 2.1%, one point less than in 2017. While the use of lean and nitrous oxide appears to be more male-oriented, that of poppers and inhalants concerns both girls and boys.

Since 2000, the rate of use of poppers has fluctuated (Figure 4), reflecting trends or changes in legislation. Poppers, for example, were banned from sale in June 2011 before their marketing was again authorised two years later. The "trivialisation" of using poppers, described in 2018 by the OFDT's TREND scheme [7], has resulted in greater accessibility: traditionally sold only in sex shops, they are more and more commonly found in tobacconists. Despite this change, the number of teenagers who had used poppers in their lifetime in 2022 remains below the peak reached in 2008 (13.7%).

Among these diverted substances, future changes in the use of nitrous oxide appears very uncertain, taking into account on the one hand the strong increase in cases of intoxication between 2018 and 2021 [8] and, on the other hand, the ban on sales to minors and the offence of provocation to diverted use since June 2021 (Law of 1 June 2021). In addition, the levels of use observed in the ESCAPAD survey appear to be significantly lower compared to those stated by 14-15-year-olds in the EnCLASS survey in 2021, 5.5% of whom claimed to have used diverted substances in their lifetime [9]. The use of visual aids in this survey of the younger age group (images of carboys and balloons) is likely to explain these differences, as the students better understood the question asked.

## Substance use according to educational status

In addition to gender, social background and geographic origin, the levels of use stated by 17-year-olds are linked to their educational situation. Although the socio-demographic data remain limited in the survey, it is possible to distinguish three main categories: students enrolled in secondary education, young people in apprenticeship training and young people who have left the school system (out-of-school adolescents, young people in the Service Civique volunteering programme or, for a negligible part of them, in employment). For high school students, the distinction between students following the general and technical streams is not specified, and the situation of those who have left the school system is not known. Nevertheless, this classification has proven to be sufficiently structuring to show significant differences in terms of substance use.

2. Having been introduced in France in 2016, the ban on sales was suspended as a precaution in December 2022, as long as the THC content remained below 0.3%. At the time of the survey, while many "shops" offered it for sale, its legal status remained undetermined, as the sale was not officially authorised.

The 2022 ESCAPAD data confirm higher levels of frequent drug use among teenagers in apprenticeships and those who have left the school system compared to secondary school students, once the structural effects of the sample have been controlled (sex, parents' occupation and socio-professional category, size of the agglomeration of residence). Among students in secondary education, differences also appear according to the general and technical or vocational course followed (see Method).

Tobacco is the product for which the differences in use according to educational status are the most striking: daily use is distributed along a gradient ranging from 10.1% among high school students following the general and technical streams to 22.1% among high school students following the vocational stream, then from 38.4% among young people in apprenticeships to 43.5% among teenagers who have left the school system. While daily tobacco use is down in all categories between 2017 and 2022, the relative decline is more marked among students (-9 points, or 39%) than among those in apprenticeships (-9 points, or 19%) and out-of-school adolescents (-13 points, or 24%), thus increasing the differences according to educational status over this period.

The consumption of alcoholic beverages appears to be more widespread among young people in apprenticeships. They account for 18.2% of regular alcohol users and 29.3% claim to have engaged in repeated HED, compared to 5.9% and 11.3% respectively among high school students following the general and technical streams. Students enrolled in the vocational stream show a similar profile and behaviour in terms of alcohol use to out-of-school adolescents, with in particular some of the lowest levels of lifetime use (respectively 77.2% and 81.2%).

Like tobacco, educational status shows striking contrasts when it comes to cannabis, with a much higher level of regular use among young people in apprenticeships (9.2%) and especially out-of-school adolescents (16.5%), compared to school students. Experimentation with and use of an illicit drug other than cannabis over the course of the year are also linked to a teenager's educational situation. Here too, there is a very clear gradient in prevalence progressing from high school students to young people who have left the school system.

Table 2. Levels of psychoactive substance use among 17-year-olds in 2022 according to educational status (%)

Substances	Use	Students 2022			Apprentices 2022	Out-of-school adolescents 2022	Students 2017	Apprentices 2017	Out-of-school adolescents 2017			
		All	General stream	Technical stream								
Tobacco	Lifetime use	44.7	42.8	49.9	67.3	65.2	57.2	***	72.1	**	76.1	***
	Daily use	13.3	10.1	22.1	38.4	43.5	22.0	***	47.3	***	57.0	***
E-cigarette	Lifetime use	55.4	52.6	63.4	73.3	71.7	51.1	***	64.9	***	61.2	***
	Daily use	5.6	4.5	8.8	13.6	9.7	1.6	***	4.8	***	3.3	***
Alcohol	Lifetime use	80.2	81.3	77.2	90.2	81.2	85.2	***	91.7	ns	85.9	**
	Regular (at least 10 uses in the month)	6.6	5.9	8.2	18.2	8.9	7.5	***	18.4	ns	12.6	**
HED	Repeated (at least 3 times in the month)	12.4	11.3	15.7	29.3	20.2	14.8	***	32.8	*	24.9	*
Cannabis	Lifetime use	28.8	28.3	29.8	42.0	44.3	37.8	***	47.6	**	53.5	***
	Regular (at least 10 uses in the month)	3.1	2.4	4.7	9.2	16.5	6.0	***	14.3	***	21.1	*
Other illicit drugs	Lifetime use	3.5	2.9	4.4	6.9	11.3	5.9	***	12.0	***	16.9	***
	Use in the year : > 1 use	1.9	1.7	2.1	3.3	5.7	3.4	***	7.0	***	8.7	*

\*, \*\*, \*\*\*: indicate statistically significant changes between 2017 and 2022 (Chi-squared test at 0.05, 0.01, 0.001); "ns" indicating no change.

Source: 2022 ESCAPAD survey (metropolitan France), OFDT

## Conclusion

The general decline in the use of psychoactive substances, whether legal or illegal, observed since 2014 among 17-year-olds in France has continued in 2022. It likely reflects a profound change in the perception of drug use, linked to the denormalization of tobacco and changing perceptions of alcohol, which is no longer systematically perceived as an essential element of a party in the eyes of new generations of young people. The continued rise in the proportion of teenagers who have never drunk alcohol in their lifetime – 1 in 5 in 2022 – is a concrete illustration of this. These general declines in the prevalence of substance use, however, conceal contrasting situations.

- The practice of heavy episodic drinking (HED) persists and is becoming more widespread among occasional drinkers, with a homogenisation of practices between girls and boys.
- The significant increase in the use of electronic cigarettes, particularly among girls, who now show higher levels of use than that stated by boys.
- Levels of drug use are higher among young people in apprenticeships and those who have left the school system compared to secondary school students.

Regarding the use of illicit drugs, all levels of lifetime use are down. On the other hand, the survey did not explore the uses of new synthetic products, even if a few rare spontaneous statements suggest the emergence of uses of 3-MMC and synthetic cannabinoids.

This snapshot of the use of psychoactive substances among 17-year-olds in 2022 reflects a favourable development in terms of public health. While the trends observed are the fruit of the dynamics at work over the past decade, which have seen a continuous decline in the distribution of tobacco, alcohol and cannabis, it should not be forgotten that they are after two exceptional years, marked by the health crisis linked to Covid-19 and several lockdowns. Among teenagers in particular, the

EnCLASS survey of 14-15-year-olds showed that 2020-2021 had logically reduced experimentation with all substances, which often takes place in social contexts. Two years later, the ESCAPAD survey shows that, not only has this decline in lifetime use not led to a catch-up period, but that these reduced levels of use seem to be permanently inscribed in the behaviour of the adolescent population. However, only future surveys will be able to confirm this hypothesis.

## Methods

Since 2000, the Survey on Health and Substance Use on National Defence and Citizenship Day (ESCAPAD) has interviewed French 17-year-olds. It primarily aims to quantify the use of drugs, legal and illegal, among the adolescent population. Its regularity makes it possible to monitor changes in levels of drug use on a national and regional scale, to identify the emergence, generalisation or decline of certain types of drug use and to study certain characteristics linked to the practices of these drug uses. ESCAPAD is an anonymous survey based on a self-administered questionnaire during the National Defence and Citizenship Day (JDC). The sampling consists of interviewing all the young people invited to the JDC over a period varying from one to two weeks in March. It is part of a broader observation scheme, which covers the entire period of adolescence in addition to the biennial survey conducted in secondary schools (EnCLASS), the 2022 results of which are to be published in September 2023.

Between 21 and 25 March 2022, all JDC sessions throughout metropolitan France were involved in the survey, i.e. 739 during the survey period, guaranteeing the participation of almost all of the young people present and the representativeness of the sample. A total of 23 701 young people completed the questionnaire. After withdrawing the most poorly or insufficiently completed questionnaires, 22 430 questionnaires could be used. Girls and boys, equally represented in the sample, have an average age of 17.4 years, considering that 91% of them are 17 years old and that the oldest are 18.5 years old, while the youngest are 17 years old. The vast majority of the sample are high school students (89.1%, of which 72% are following the general or technical streams),

while those in apprenticeships represent 4.3% of the young people interviewed. Overall, the socio-demographic margins of the sample are very close to those of the source population. For the first time, the survey could not take place in the overseas territories at the same time, given the still complicated health conditions in 2022. All metropolitan regions are represented, with the exception of Corsica where the survey could not take place. The publication of the regional results is scheduled for the summer of 2023.

### Main indicators

- Lifetime use: use at least once in a lifetime
- Use in the last year (or current use): use at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey
- Use in the last month (or recent use): use at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey
- Regular use: use at least 10 times in the 30 days prior to the survey
- Daily use for alcohol and cannabis: 30 or more uses over the course of the month.

For heavy episodic drinking (HED), i.e. the intake of at least 5 glasses on a single occasion:

- HED in the month prior to the survey: at least once over the course of the month
- repeated HED: at least 3 times in the month prior to the survey
- regular HED: at least 10 times in the month prior to the survey

*Note: All changes or differences in levels mentioned in the text are statistically significant (Chi-squared test,  $p < 0.05$ ).*

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## Teenage health seen through the ESCAPAD survey

Given the exceptional health situation experienced by the entire population between 2020 and 2021, a situation for which we have observed the positive effects on teenage drug use, it seems important to identify whether the other health indicators present in the Survey on Health and Substance Use on National Defence and Citizenship Day (ESCAPAD) confirm this encouraging picture of young people in metropolitan France. While this description remains brief given the survey protocol which constrains the time taken (table below), the changes measured between 2017 and 2022 suggest a deterioration in health for some teenagers.

The ESCAPAD survey makes it possible to first observe the perception that young people have of their general health. Considering oneself in good health can be interpreted as an absence of illness or injury, or as the expression of well-being (physical, mental, social, etc.).

In 2022, when asked "Compared to people your age, would you say your health is..." Not at all satisfactory/unsatisfactory/fairly satisfactory/very satisfactory", a very large majority of young people (91.3%) answered that their health is "fairly" or "very satisfactory", including more than half answering "very satisfactory". This proportion is slightly lower than in 2017 and is reflected in 2022 by a 2-point increase in the share of those who perceive their state of health as "unsatisfactory" or "not at all satisfactory" (8.8% vs. 6.7% in 2017), girls being more

numerous in this case (10.3% vs. 7.3% among boys). Although having a medical consultation at least once a year is down slightly compared to 2017, it is still very high (86.9%). The reasons for these consultations remain unknown, however, as well as the health problems encountered by 34.3% of 17-year-olds in the last 12 months, which show a very slight increase.

Stating a body mass index (BMI) falling within the underweight range concerns 4.1% of the adolescent population, compared to 3.4% in 2017. The same is true for the proportion of obese teenagers, which has risen from 3.7% to 5.1%. Being underweight or overweight is often associated with situations of psychological distress, which is also likely to have progressed.

The most revealing dimension of a deterioration in the state of health of teenagers in 2022 concerns mental health, with an estimate of severe symptoms of anxiety/depression measured using the Adolescent Depression Rating Scale (ADRS) [10] up sharply over this period (9.5% vs. 4.5% in 2017). Two other indicators, also on the rise, corroborate this observation: the significant increase in suicide attempts which led to hospitalisation and the very clear increase in the proportion of young people who had had suicidal thoughts over the course of the year (18.0% vs. 11.4% in 2017). This phenomenon, which is very marked by gender, concerns girls twice as often as boys (24.0% vs. 12.3%).

### Health indicators and changes between 2017 and 2022 (%)

	Boys 2022	Girls 2022	Difference boys/girls	All 2022	All 2017	Change 2017/2022
Self-perceived health "not at all satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory"	7.3	10.3	***	8.8	6.7	↗
Seen a doctor over the course of the year (≥ 1)	84.4	89.5	***	86.9	90.3	↘
Seen a dentist over the course of the year (≥ 1)	59.8	63.1	***	61.4	65.1	↘
Health problem over the course of the year	30.3	38.5	***	34.3	33.2	↗
Dental problem over the course of the year	17.9	17.2	**	17.6	17.3	→
Underweight (BMI (boys) < 17.2 kg/m <sup>2</sup> . (girls) < 16.6 kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	5.0	3.0	***	4.1	3.4	↗
Obesity (BMI (boys) > 28.2 kg/m <sup>2</sup> . (girls) > 28.7 kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	5.9	4.3	***	5.1	3.7	↗
Significant risk of depression (ADRS score > 6)	5.2	14.0	***	9.5	4.5	↗
Suicide attempt leading to hospitalisation in a lifetime (≥ 1)	1.9	4.8	***	3.3	2.9	↗
Suicidal thoughts over the course of the year	12.3	24.0	***	18.0	11.4	↗

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## Ours

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