

Key Findings on 2019

European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs

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AGENDA



ESPAD at a glance



Key findings



Conclusion



Key Findings on 2019

European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs

○ ESPAD at a glance

A graphic on the left side of the page features a grey target with concentric circles. Five arrows of different colors (teal, purple, dark purple, pink, and dark red) are shown as if they have just hit the center bullseye, with their shafts extending towards the bottom-left corner.

ESPAD at a glance / Objectives of the ESPAD study

Collect

Cross-national representative data comparable across countries and over time



Advance

Scientific knowledge of adolescent substance use



Deepen

Investigation of new addictive behaviours



Support

Evidence-based policy and practice



Expand

Research network and international collaborations



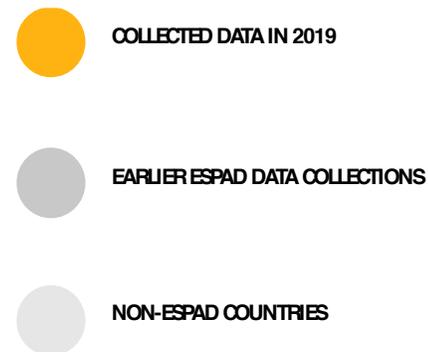
ESPAD at a glance / **The ESPAD path**

STARTED IN 1995 AS INDEPENDENT COLLABORATIVE STUDY

7 CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEYS

MORE THAN 600,000 STUDENTS SURVEYED AND 49 COUNTRIES INVOLVED

99,647 STUDENTS IN 35 COUNTRIES IN 2019



ESPAD at a glance / **Methodology**

Sample

Nationally representative samples of students reaching age 16 in the calendar year (advised 2,400)

Administration

Data collected by anonymous self-administered questionnaires in schools following a standardised methodology

Time

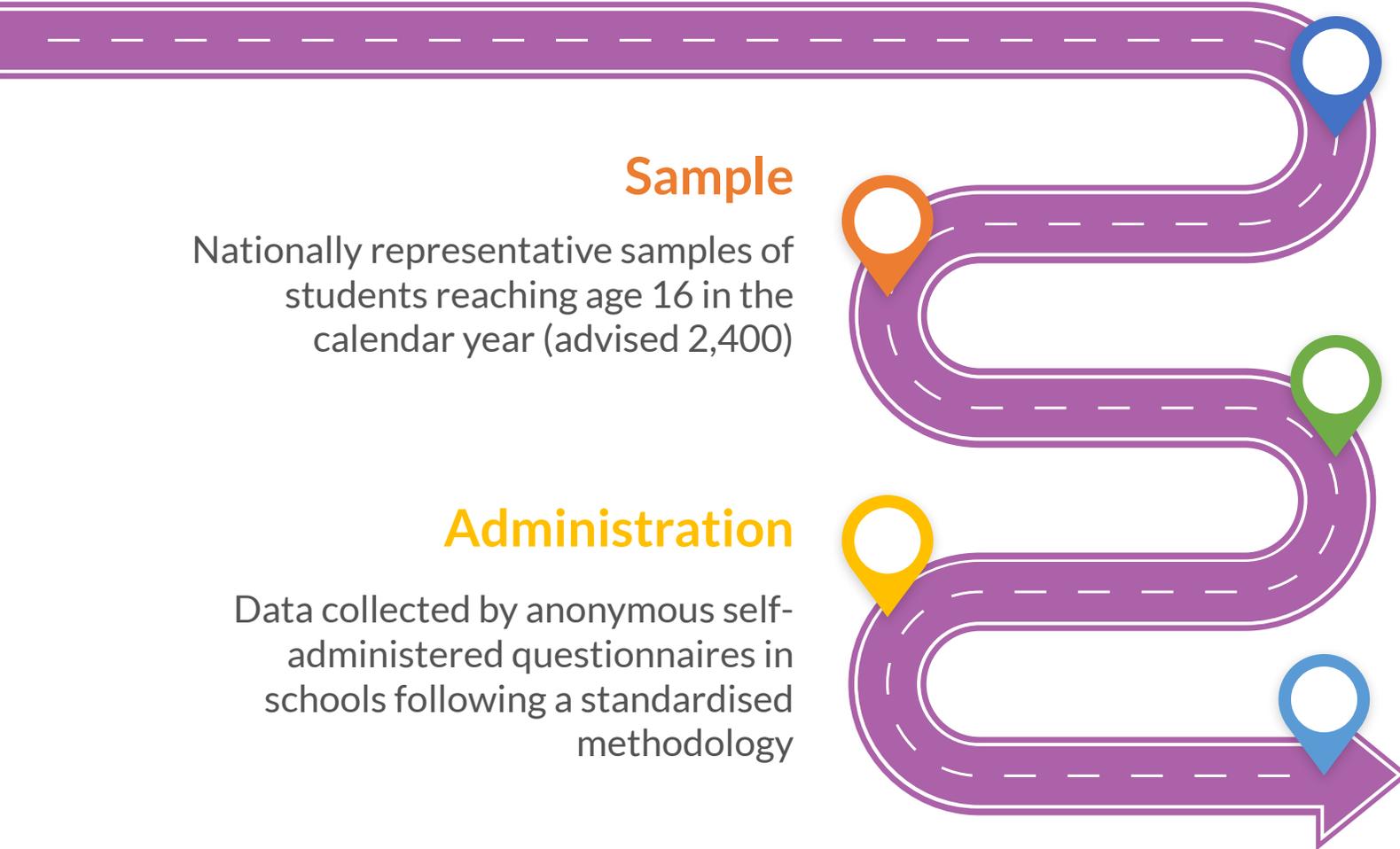
Every 4 years (spring) since 1995

Unit

Primary sampling unit: school class

Questionnaire

Core questionnaire common to all countries plus optional questions



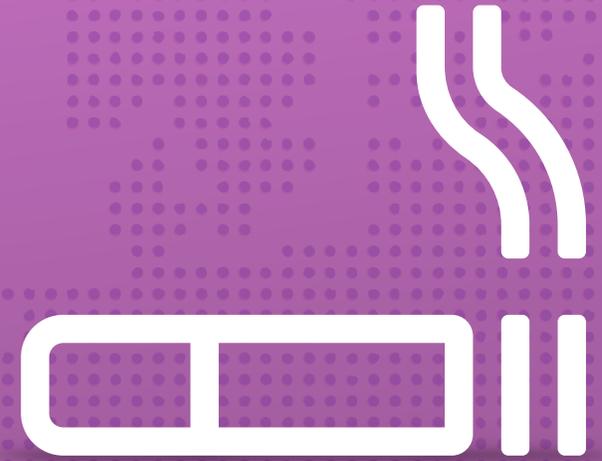


○ Key findings

Key findings

- Cigarette use & vaping
- Alcohol use
- Cannabis use & other illicit substances
- New psychoactive substances
- Pharmaceutical use for non-medical purposes
- Early onset & perceived availability
- Gambling
- Social media use & gaming





① Key findings

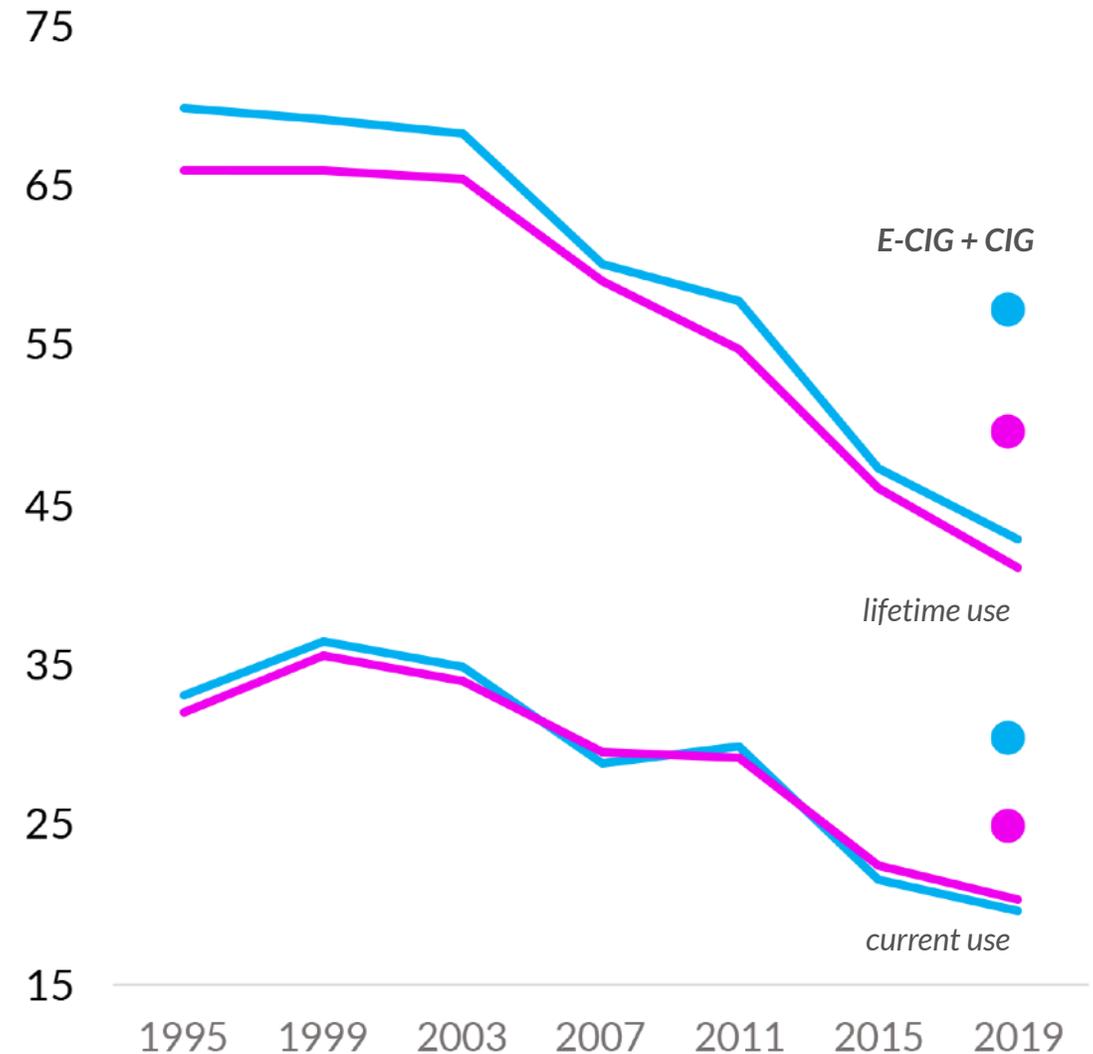
Cigarette use & vaping



Cigarette use & vaping / Key results

- Most had **never smoked** traditional cigarettes (58 %)
- Gender differences seem to **have narrowed** over time
- One fifth (20 %) reported being a **current smoker**
- High prevalence of **e-cigarettes vaping** both for lifetime use (40%) and for current use (14%)
- Considering cigarette and e-cigarettes use together, **the prevalence of lifetime use rises to 53%** and that of current users to 26%

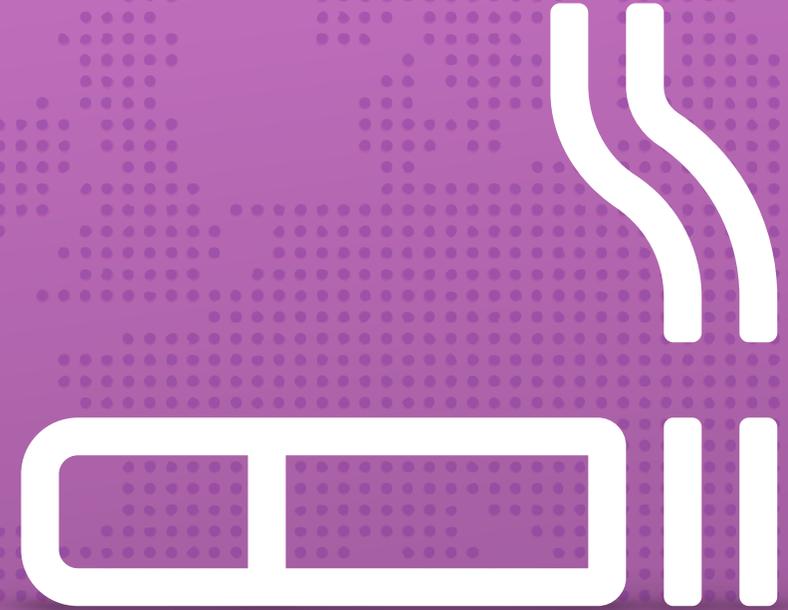
ESPAD





Cigarette use & vaping / Lesson learned...

- **Progress in reducing tobacco consumption** has been registered in many European areas
- The **expansion of tobacco/nicotine products supply** has led to an increase in the prevalence of **consumption**
- **The majority of those who started using e-cigarettes did so without previously trying tobacco**
- Since it is likely that a high proportion of these devices include nicotine, **it seems that overall adolescent nicotine use could be rising again**
- Considering cigarette smoking alone may lead to **an underestimation of current nicotine consumption**

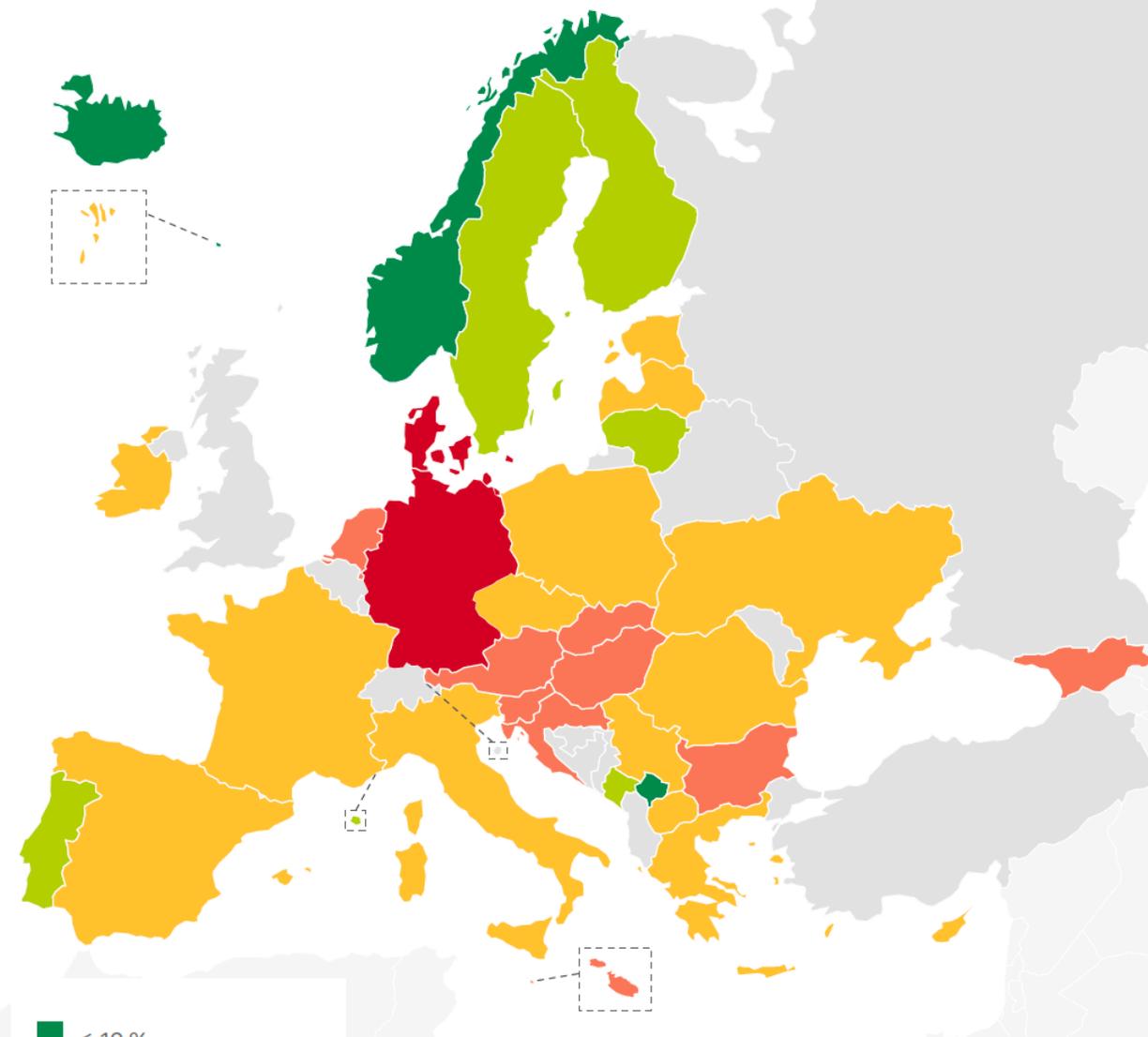


⦿ Key findings
Alcohol use

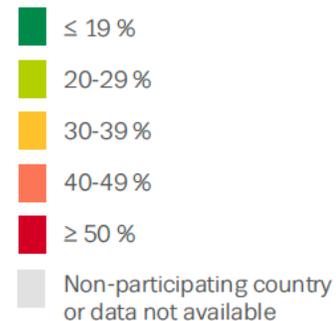


Alcohol use / Key results

Large variations among countries have been observed both in the prevalence of alcohol use and in patterns of use (frequency of intake, average ethanol intake and heavy episodic drinking)



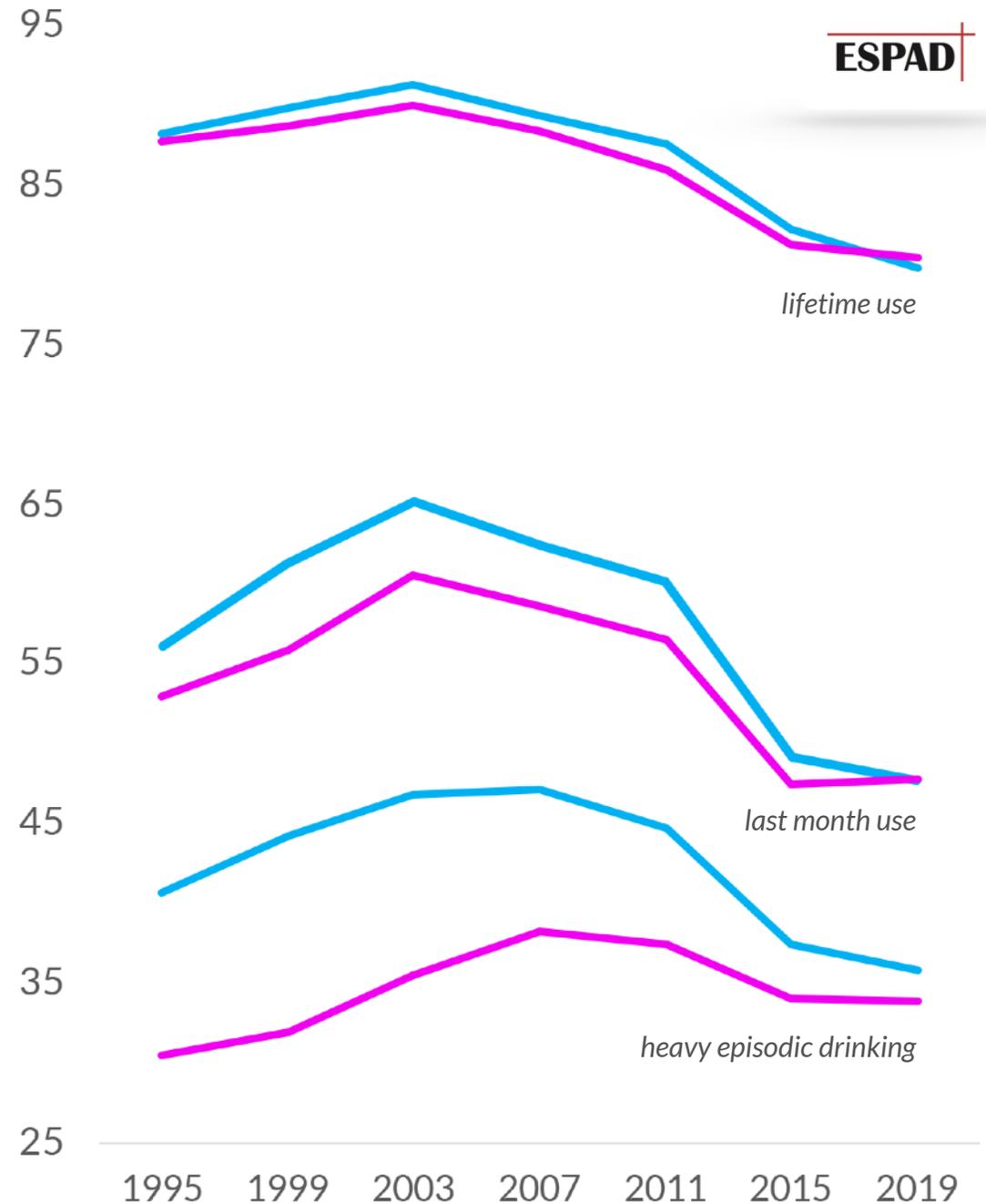
Heavy episodic drinking in the last 30 days





Alcohol use / Key results

- Trend data show some steady decreases, even though alcohol use is still rather high
- The prevalence of 'heavy episodic drinking' reached its lowest level
- The gender gap in the prevalence of heavy episodic drinking has narrowed over time
- In terms of prevalence rates and perception of availability, spirits have gained ground over beer, particularly among female students



- Key findings

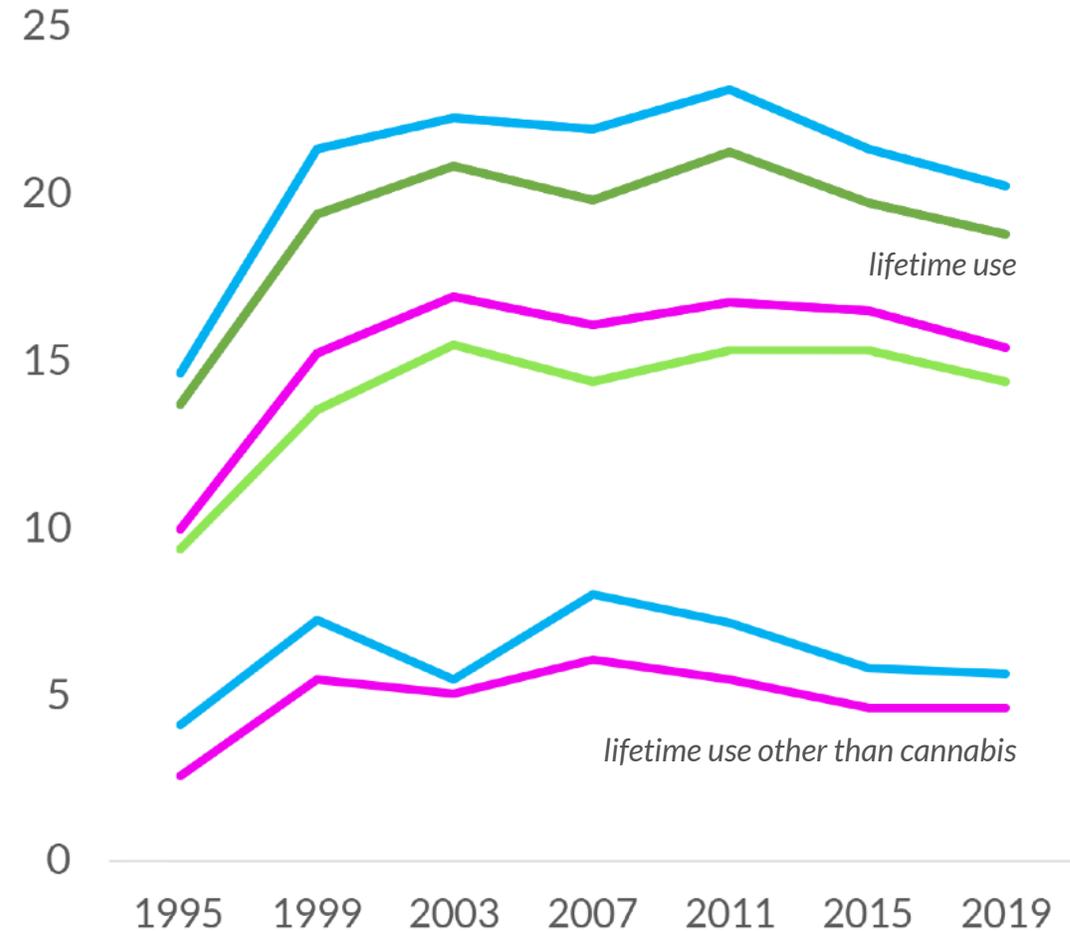
Cannabis use & other illicit drugs





Cannabis & other drugs / Key results

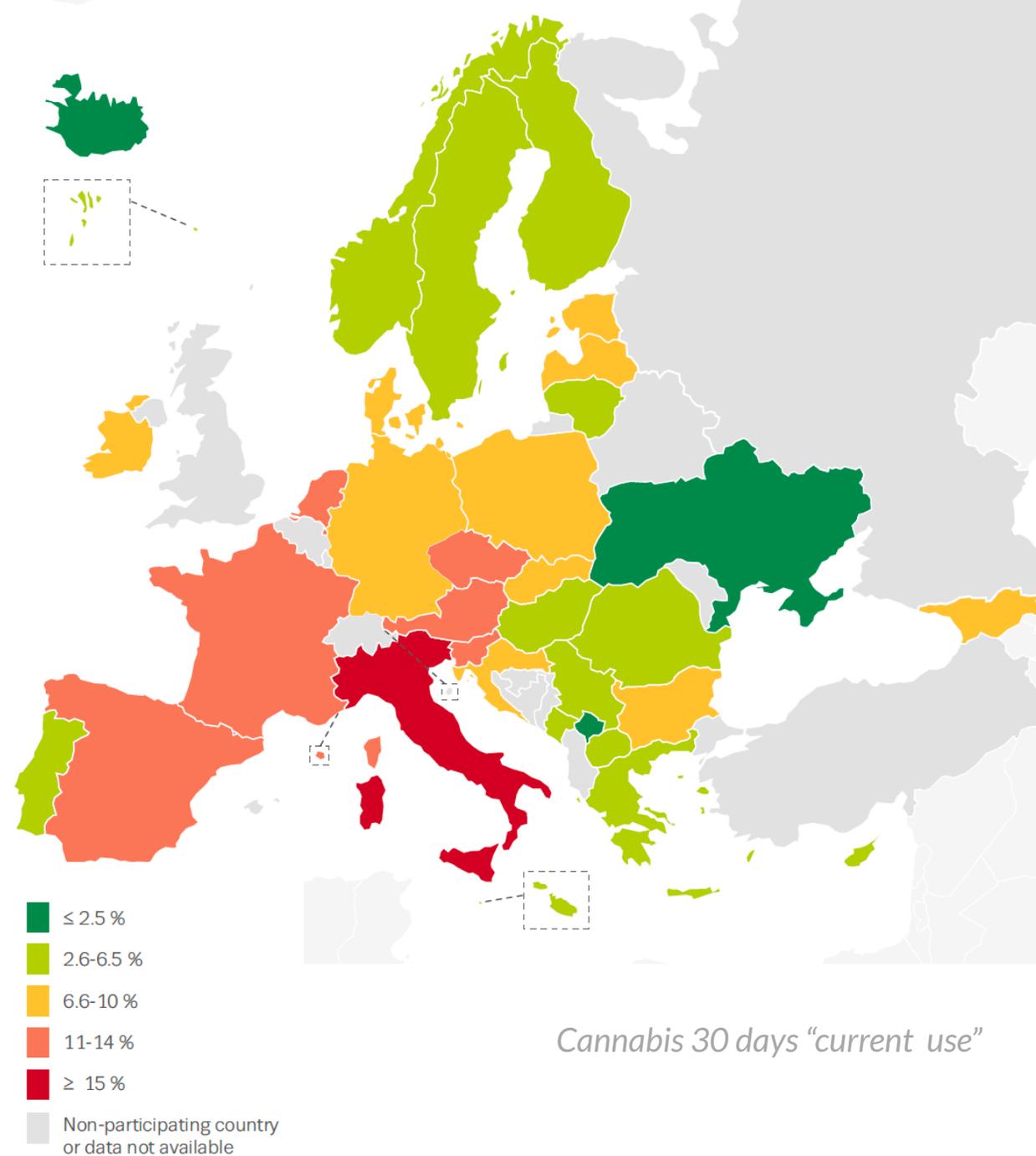
- The average prevalence of lifetime use of illicit drugs was 17%, with considerable variation across ESPAD countries
- Use mainly relates to cannabis use (average 16%)
- As for illicit drugs other than cannabis, on average, about 5.0 % of the ESPAD students reported having used them at least once during their lifetime
- Lifetime use of illicit drugs other than cannabis rose to a peak in 2007





Cannabis / Key results

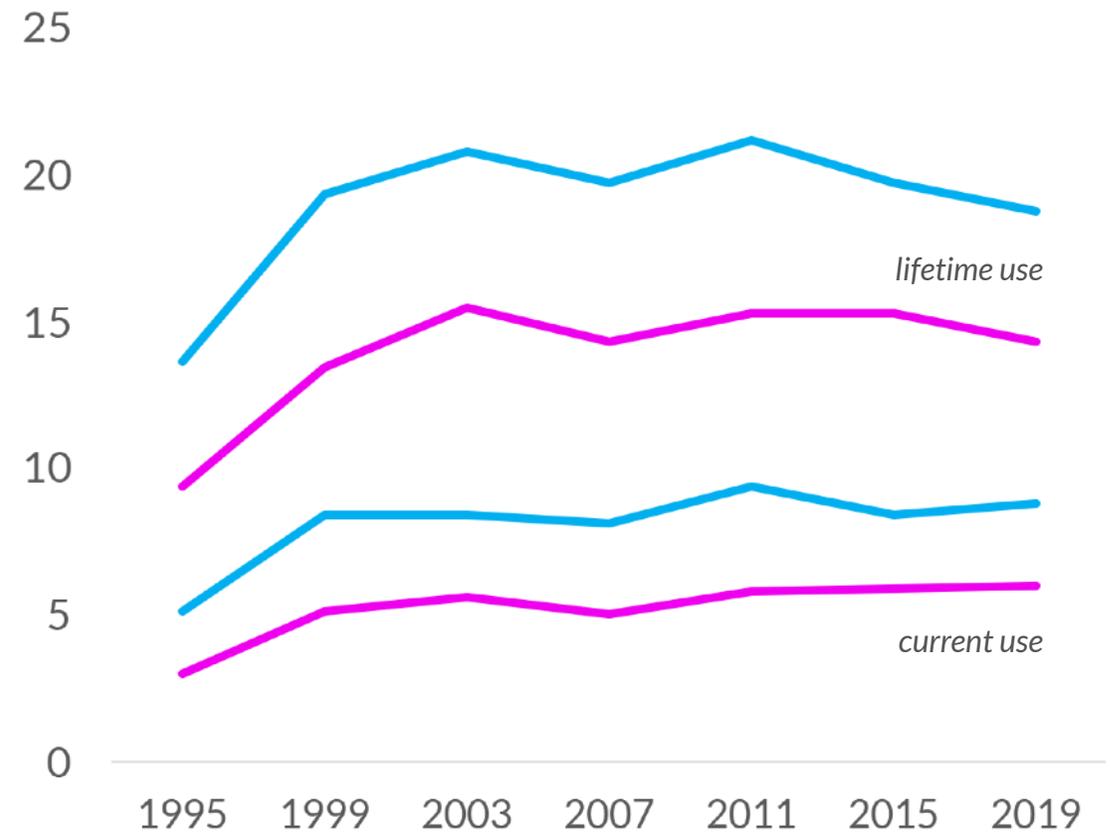
Cannabis is the illicit drug most accessible and most used by school students in ESPAD countries **with a large variation between countries**





Cannabis / Key results

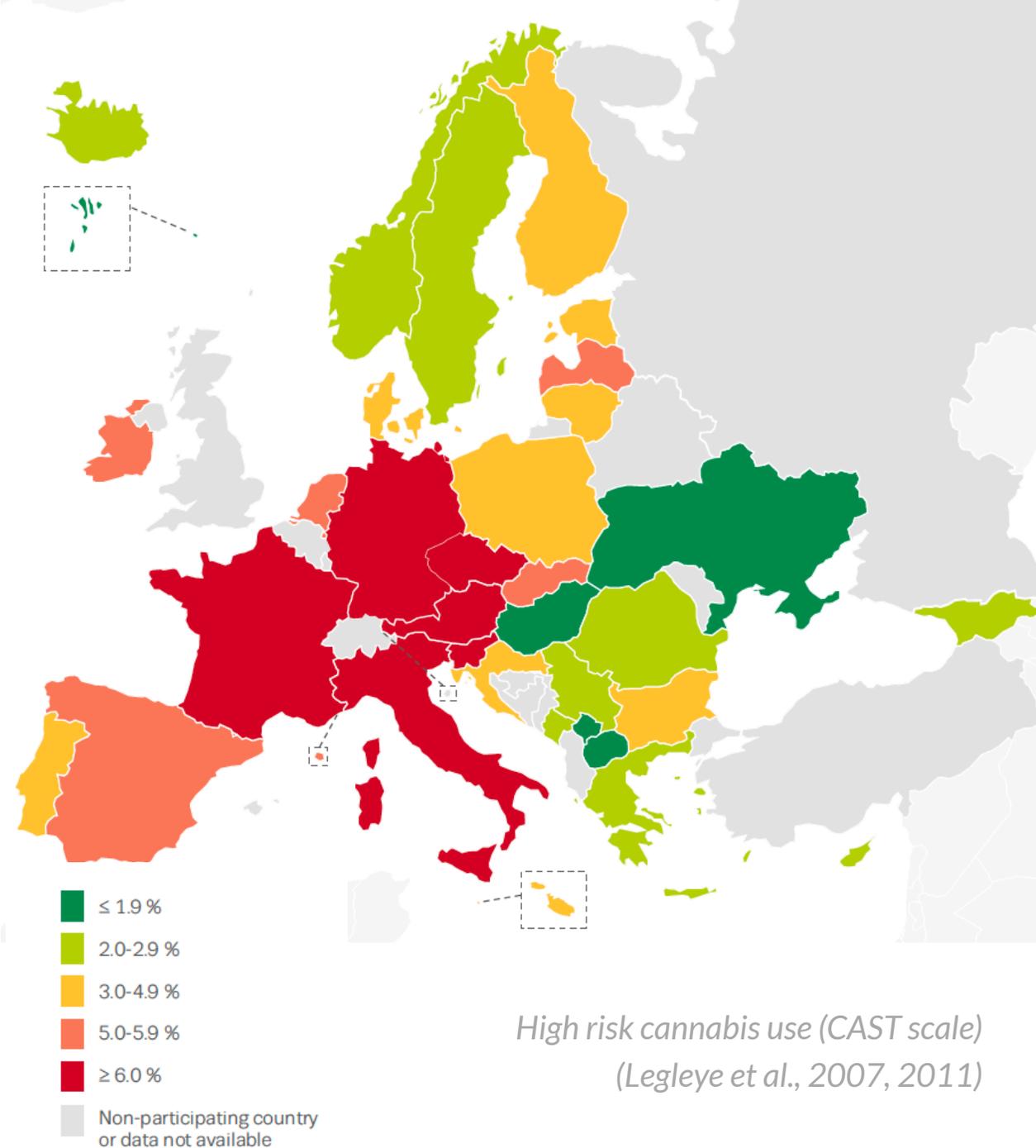
- Cannabis is the illicit drug most accessible, almost one third of students report “easy/fairly easy” to obtain
- On average 2.4% reported having used cannabis for the first time at age of 13 or younger
- Lifetime use has slowly declined since 2011
- Current use (last 30 days) has stabilised since 2007





Cannabis / Key results

High-risk cannabis use across all participating countries was first explored in the 2019 survey; on average, **4% of respondents** fell into this category and are **potentially at risk of developing cannabis-related problems**





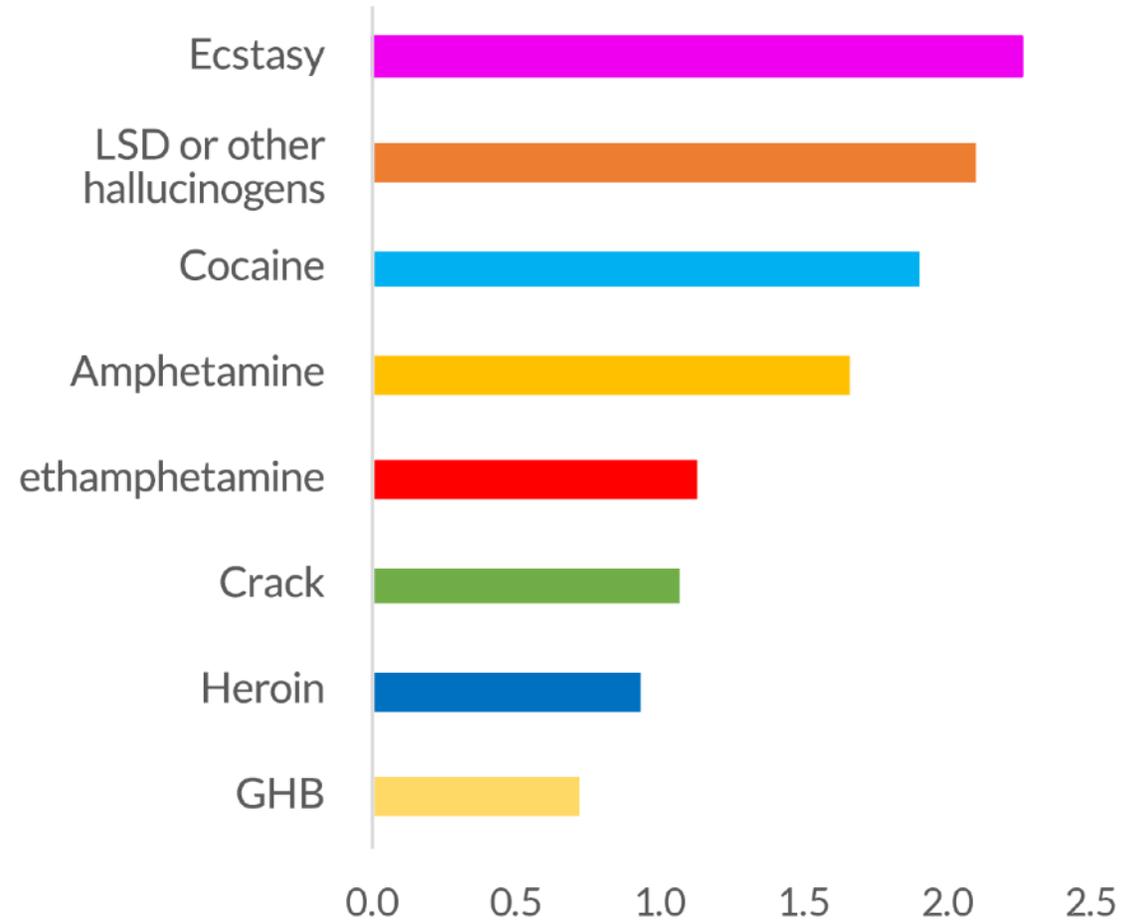
Other illicit drugs / Key results

On average 1-2% of students have ever used an illicit drug other than cannabis at least once

Considering the use at least once the prevalence rises to 5%

The most popular drugs were ecstasy, LSD, other hallucinogens, cocaine and amphetamine

ESPAD



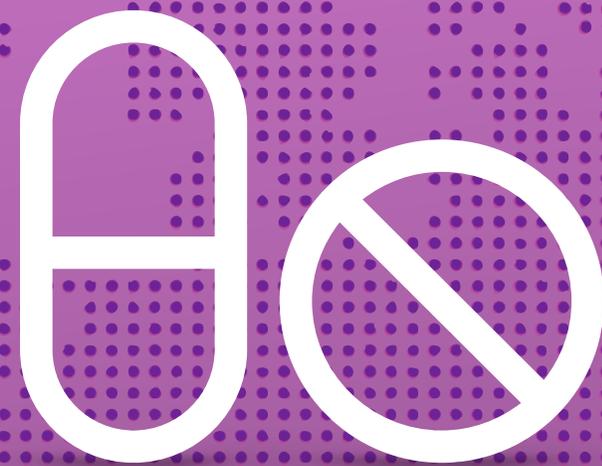
Percentage of students reporting use of illicit drugs



Cannabis & other illicit drugs / Lesson learned...

- **All indicators are substantially higher than in 1995**
- Overall, the 2019 data suggest that cannabis use and its perceived availability vary widely among European adolescents, with the **large differences in these indicators across ESPAD countries not showing any tendencies towards convergence**
- **Perceived availability do not seem to be automatically related to cannabis use and problems** (both for use and high-risk use)
- New forms of cannabis are much more potent than in the past: even in countries where the prevalence of use underwent limited changes, **the potential health risks for adolescents may have changed**
-



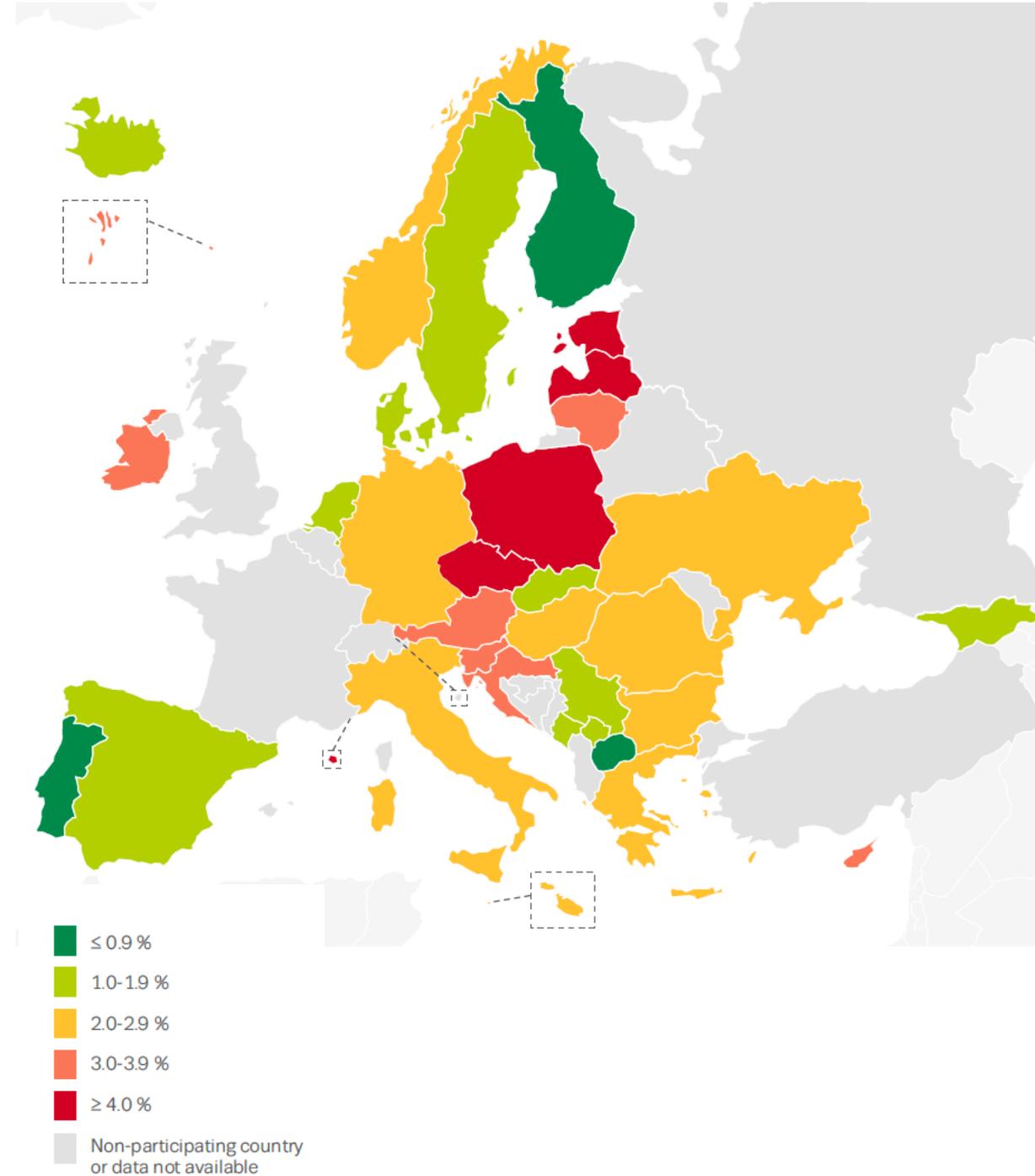


- ① Key findings

New psychoactive
substances

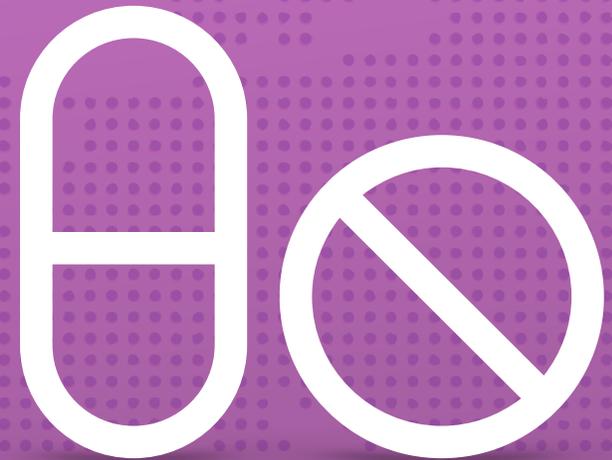
NPS / Key results

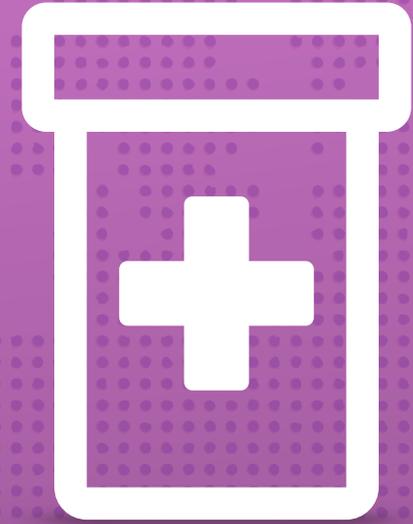
- 3.4 % of the ESPAD students had tried NPS during their lifetime, 2.5 % had used them in the past 12 months
- Although not fully comparable, the 2015 results were in a similar range to those of 2019, with slightly higher values in 2015
- Synthetic cannabinoids 3.1% and cathinones: 1.1 %



● NPS / Lesson learned...

- **Higher levels of use** than for amphetamine, ecstasy, cocaine or LSD individually, **but not as a group** (e.g. stimulants)
- Most NPS users are in fact polysubstance users: NPS use **should not be viewed as an isolated, specific phenomenon**
- Currently a **lack of internationally representative and comparable data** in this area: value of ESPAD
- **Challenge: what are we measuring?**
Definition: psychotropic drugs not controlled by the United Nations drug conventions but which may pose a public health threat comparable to that caused by substances listed in these conventions > **governments are moving towards chemical groups, we did the same**



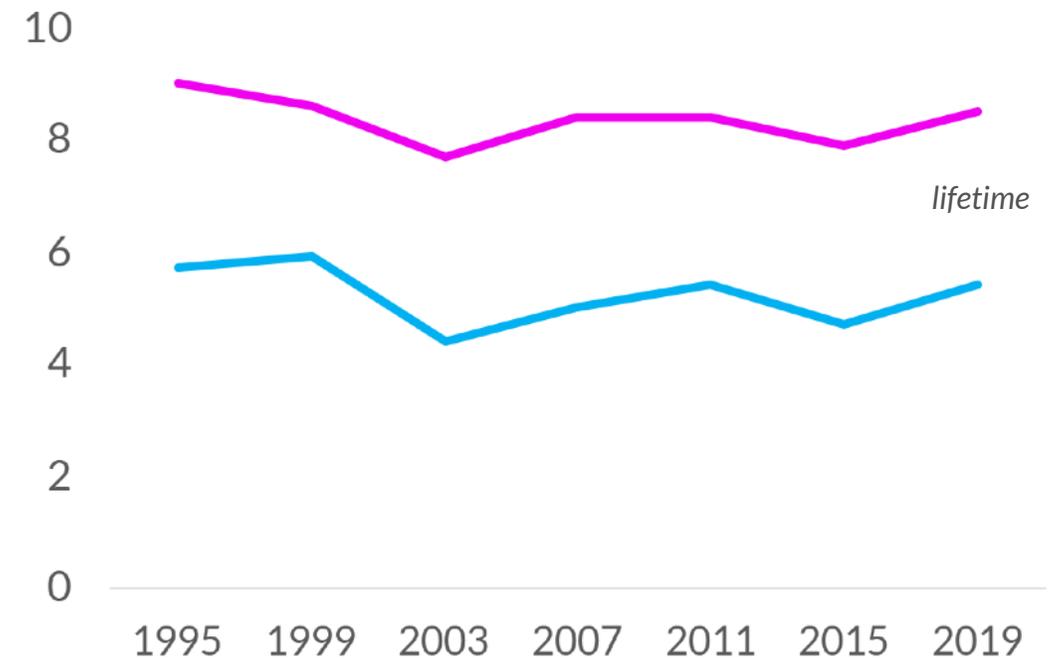


① Key findings

Pharmaceutical use for
non-medical purposes

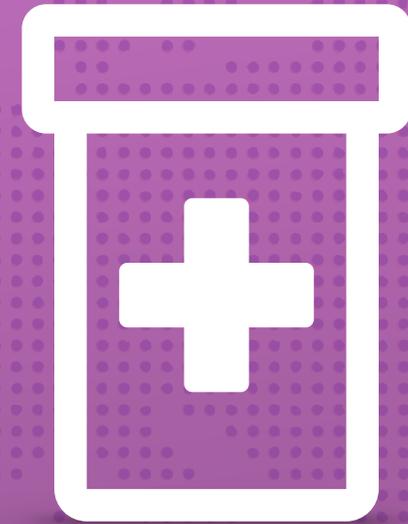
Pharmaceutical use for non-medical purposes / Key results

- 9.2 % of the students reported lifetime use of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes, with quite large differences across countries (range: 2.8 % to 23 %)
- Both on average and in the vast majority of ESPAD countries, **girls were more likely than boys** to have used pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes
- Most used were tranquilisers or sedatives (6.6%), followed by painkillers 'to get high' (4.0%), anabolic steroids (1.0 %)



● Pharmaceutical use for non-medical purposes / Lesson learned...

- Use of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes is considered **globally as a major emerging problem that needs to be monitored: ESPAD shows that also in Europe** the non-medical use of prescription drugs among adolescents **remains a concern**
- Students may **misuse pharmaceuticals for a range of reasons:** induce euphoria, enhance the effects of alcohol and other drugs, to self-medicate, mitigate the symptoms of withdrawal, improve school performance
- Users may be at high risk of developing **symptoms of a prescription drug use disorder: paradox** as research suggests that adolescents may seek them because they believe that these substances are safer than illicit drugs





① Key findings

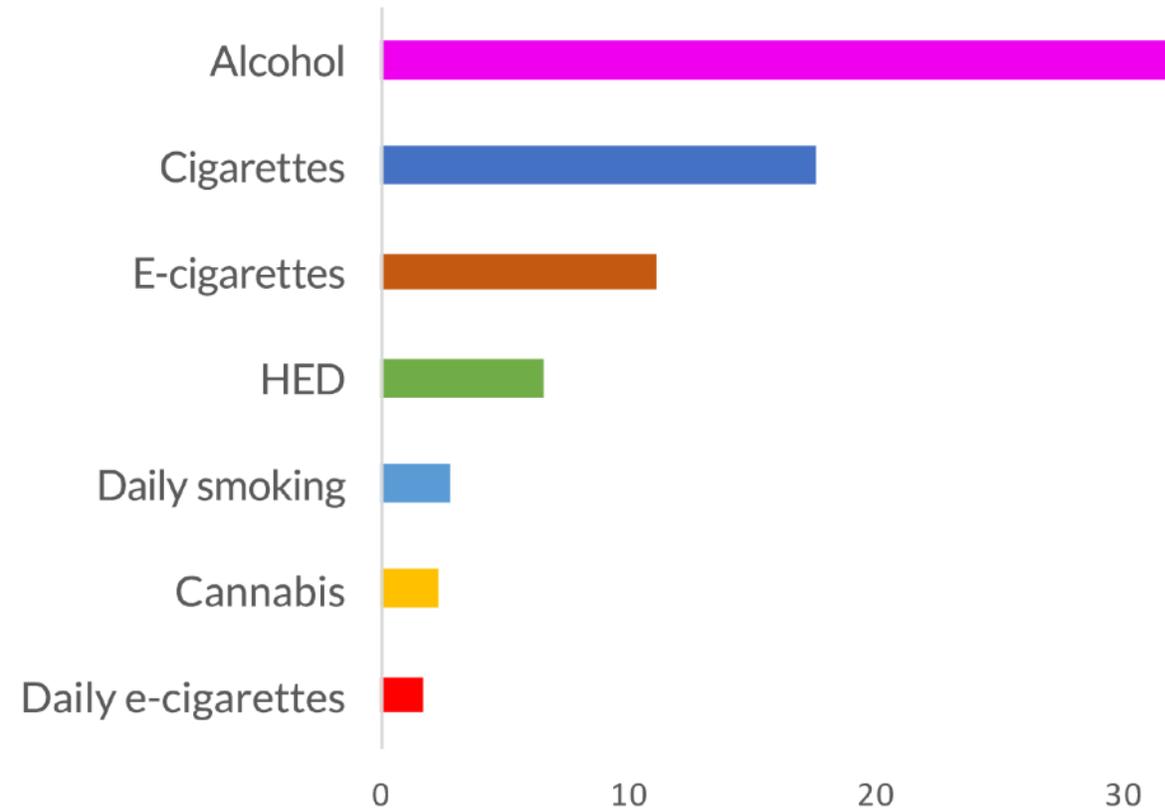
Early onset &
perceived availability



Early onset / Key results

- One in three ESPAD students reported alcohol use at age 13 or younger
- One in 15, reported alcohol intoxication
- More than one in six ESPAD students had smoked cigarettes at age 13 or younger
- 2.4% reported they had first used cannabis at age 13 or younger

ESPAD



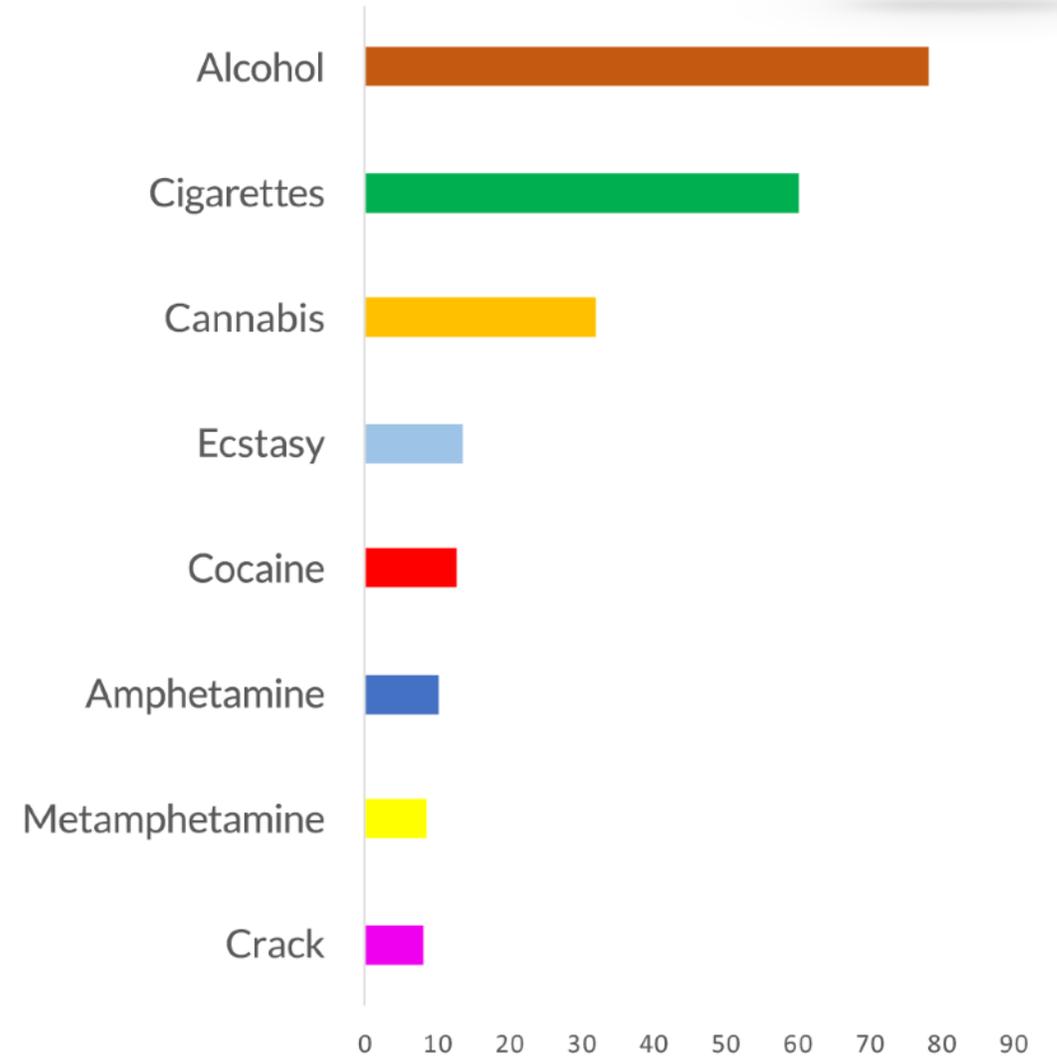
Percentage of students using a substance at the age of 13 or younger



Perceived Availability / Key results

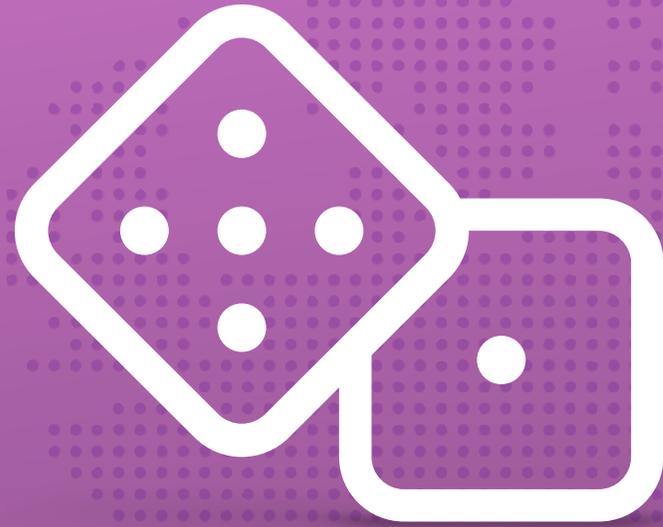
- **Alcoholic substances** are those perceived as being more readily available
- One in three ESPAD students considers it 'easy / very easy' to find **cannabis**

ESPAD



Percentage of students rating a substance as either 'fairly easy' or 'very easy' to obtain

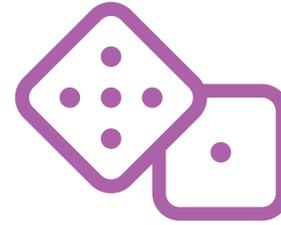
① Key findings
Gambling





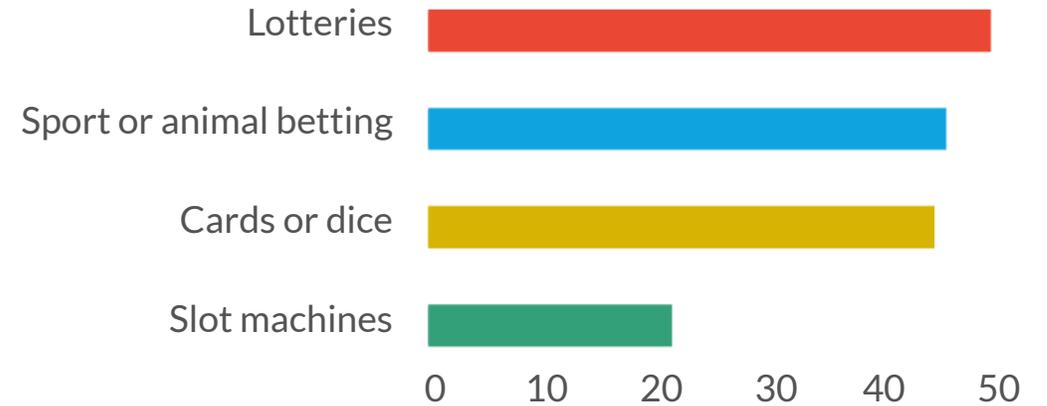
Gambling / Key results

- 22 % of adolescent students in Europe reported gambling for money on at least one game in the past 12 months, 7,9% online gambling
- On average, **5.0%** of students who had gambled in the last 12 months met the **criteria for problem gambling** (Johnson et al., 1997)
- The extent of estimated prevalence, problem and excessive gambling was **more prevalent among boys**

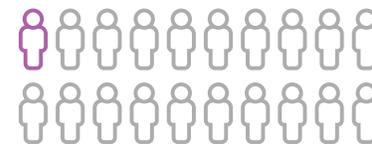


Gambling
22%

ESPAD



Online gambling
7.9%

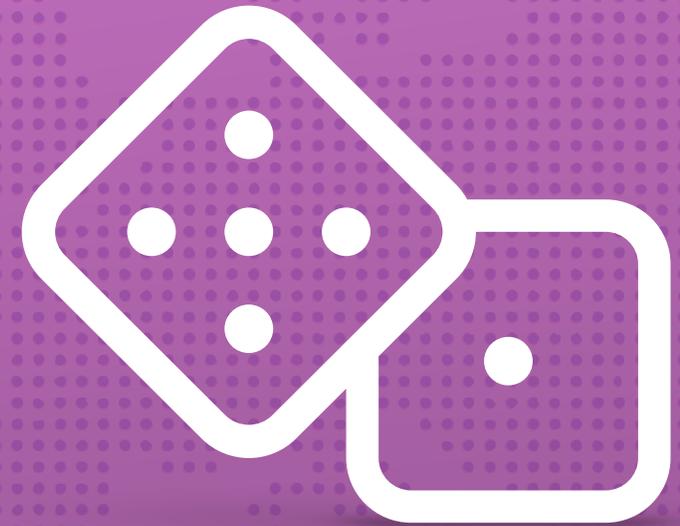


Estimated problem gambling
5.0%



Gambling / Lesson learned...

- **Increased availability of gambling opportunities** resulting from the progressive liberalisation of the gambling sector in many countries seems to drive high prevalence
- Prevalence of gambling participation and prevalence of excessive and/or problem gambling are not necessarily correlated
- **Association of excessive gambling with an increased use of legal and illegal substances:** hypothesised that this is because of the influence of common underlying factors, such as impulsivity and sensation seeking ➤ prevention and intervention programmes targeted at all kinds of risk behaviours, focusing on the most prevalent risk activities





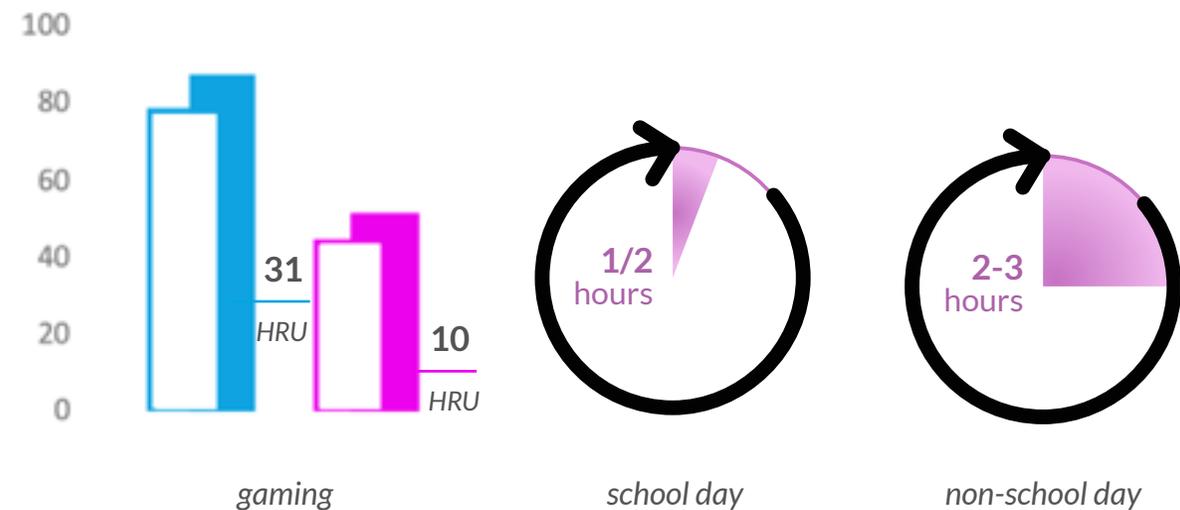
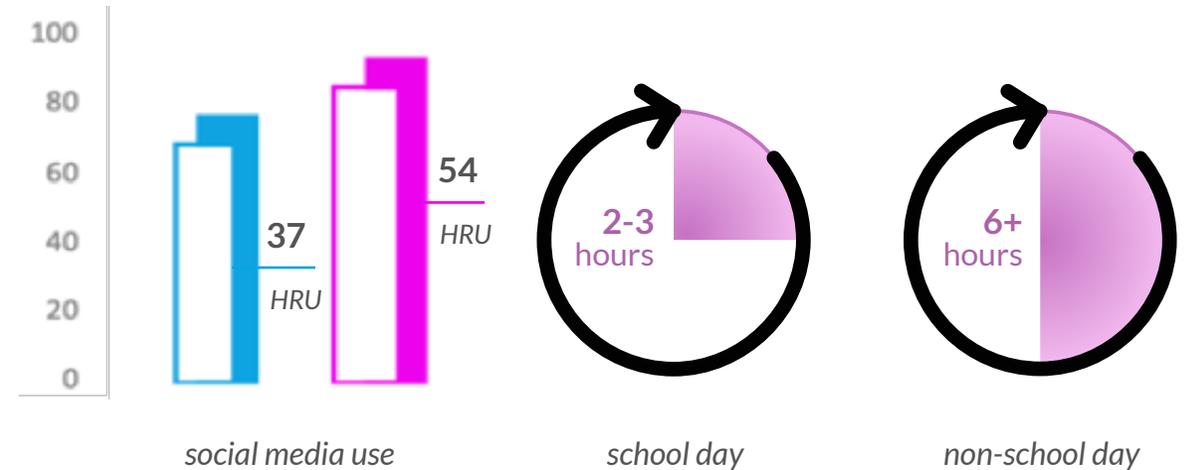
○ Key findings

Social media use
& gaming

Social media use & gaming / Key results

- The majority of students (94 %) reported use of social media in the last 7 days
- In most of countries, students spent 2 to 3 hours on social media on a typical school day and up to 6 hours on non-school days
- Around 60 % of ESPAD students played digital games on a school day in the last 30 days
- Self-perceived high-risk use was higher for social media use (46 %) than for gaming (21 %) (Holstein et al., 2014)

ESPAD



● Social media use & gaming / Lesson learned...

- During non-school days, **girls were slightly more likely than boys to spend more time on social media**, while **boys spent twice as much time gaming than girls both on school and non-school days**
- **Problems related to social media use were more prevalent among girls** across all European countries, while **those related to gaming were more prevalent among boys**



Key Findings on 2019

European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs

○ Conclusion



OUR COMMITMENT TO MONITORING

Changes in long-term trends

Emergence of new substances,
new forms of substance use and
risk behaviors

For better policies and
interventions

 Understand the potential of new technologies

both for addiction (social media and gaming)
and as delivery systems (nicotine and cannabis vaping)

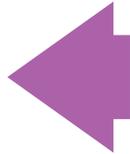
 Investigate new substances and
contextualise their use

by keeping up with emergence of NPS,
'established drugs' with higher potency (cannabis)
and patterns of consumption (poli-use)

 Support comprehensive actions

by deepening the study of driving factors
of both substance use and behaviors,
also exploiting potential of information, communication and technologies

Data access



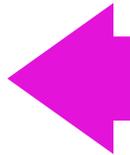
Improve access for researchers and exploration for general public

Methodology



Develop innovative data collection methods

Network

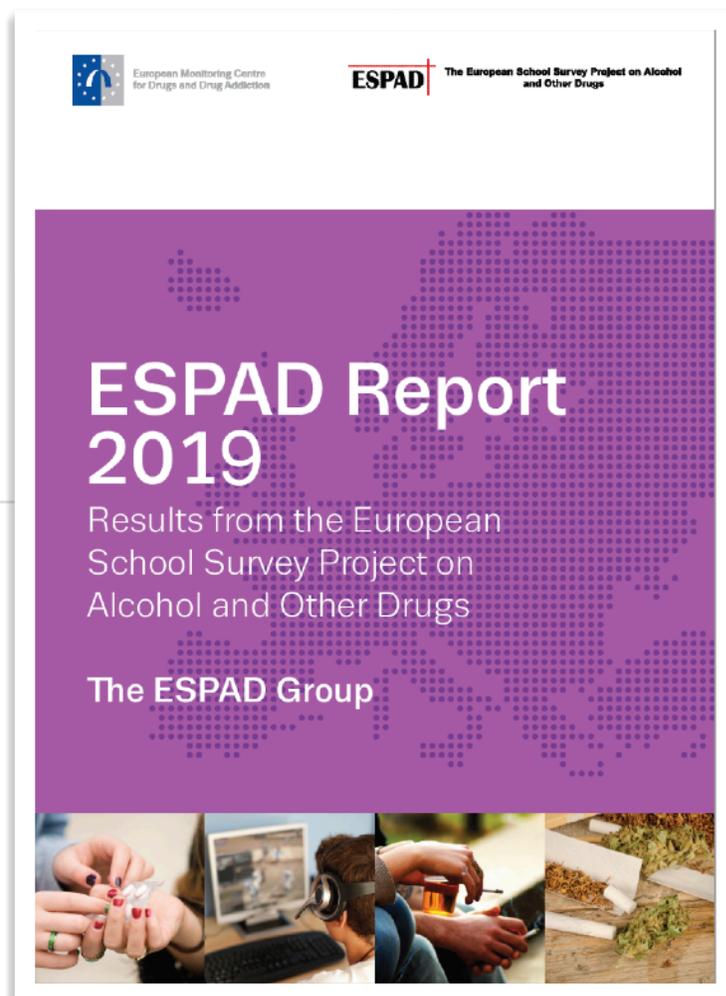


Enlarge project's coverage and stakeholders' network

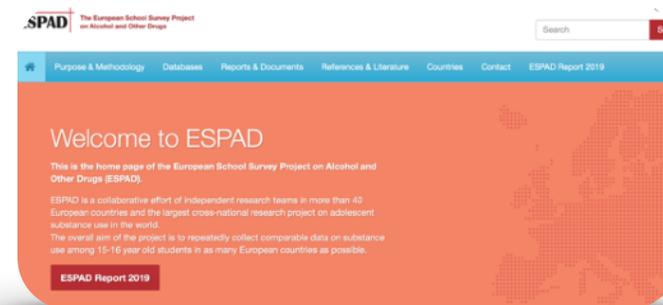
ESPAD project / Dissemination of results



European report



Additional tables



www.espad.org



www.emcdda.europa.eu

Thank you for the attention