

SUBSTANCE USE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE NETHERLANDS:

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PREVALENCE OF USE AND RISK PERCEPTION

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CONTENT

- Prevalence drug use young adults
- Acute health incidents
- Prevalence drug use college students
- Riskperception
- Implications for prevention

OVERVIEW OF PREVALENCE OF XTC, COCAÏNE AND AMPHETAMINE USE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Figure 1: Prevalence of recent drug use (last year) in %

	15–34 yr Europe ('17)	15–34 yr Netherlands ('17)	20–24 yr Netherlands ('17)
XTC	1.7	7.1	13.1
Cocaine	2.1	4.5	7.9
Amphetamine	1.0	3.9	6.0

References:

- EMCDDA 2019 (data largely from 2016 or 2017)
- Gezondheidsenquête/Leefstijlmonitor CBS, RIVM, Trimbos-instituut, 2017

HEALTH INCIDENTS RELATED TO DRUG USE

- Monitor Drug Incidents (DMI) 2018 in the Netherlands
 - Pooled data from Ambulance, First Aid Services, Hospitals in the Netherlands.
 - 6.108 drug-related health incidents in 2018, around 800 severe.
 - Half of the incidents involved people younger than 25yr
 - Prevalence of drug use is reflected in the incidents (31% included XTC, 16% cocaine, 11% Amphetamine)
 - GHB and Ketamine are particularly risky
 - 19% polydrug use, strongly related to severity of incident

WHAT ABOUT COLLEGE STUDENTS?

- A subgroup of young adults
- Existing data on prevalence of drug use is inconclusive (Dorselaer & Goossens, 2015):
 - Metastudy showed large differences in prevalence of drug use, for a large part due to non-representative samples (selection largely through internet fora).
- We are also interested in the knowledge about the health risks of the substances

TWO STUDIES IN GRONINGEN (2017 & 2019)

- **stratified sample in Groningen:**
 - 50.000 students; University and Applied university, 5 fields (Human sciences, Law, Economics, Life sciences, sciences & Technology).
 - Making sure that all 'types of students' are proportionally represented; going to campuses on multiple locations and time-slots
 - $N '17 = 266$, $N '19 = 488$

PREVALENCE OF DRUG USE YOUNG ADULTS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Figure 2: Prevalence of recent drug use (last year) in %

	15–34 yr Europe (‘17)	15–34 yr Netherlands (‘17)	20–24 yr Netherlands (‘17)	Students Groningen (‘17)	Students Groningen (‘19)
XTC	1.7	7.1	13.1	25.6	20.0
Cocaine	2.1	4.5	7.9	11.7	11.3
Amphetamine	1.0	3.9	6.0	9.8	7.2
Ketamine					4.7
GHB					1.0

RISKPERCEPTION

- 15 statements (True / False / Dont know) about:
 - **Strength and quality of the substances**
 - “Every XTC–pill has the same strength”
 - **Mixing / combining substances**
 - “Combining XTC and speed is extra dangerous”
 - **Substance–specific risks**
 - “When on XTC, the more water you drink, the better”
 - “Cocaine can look like heroin”
 - “When on XTC at a danceparty, overheating is a risk”

RISK PERCEPTION: RESULTS

- **Strength and quality:**

- Users are aware that quality and strength can vary significantly (around 6% thinks that quality and strength is fixed)

- **Mixing with other substances**

- 8% thinks that combining (uppers with downers, drugs with alcohol, XTC with speed) does not increase health risks
- 2% thinks that combining drugs with prescription medicine is not a risk

- **Substance-specific**

- 25% thinks, the more MDMA in XTC, the better the effect
- 15% thinks cocaine cannot resemble heroin
- 12% thinks, the more water you drink while on XTC, the better
- 7% thinks that overheating on XTC during a rave party is not a risk

CONCLUSIONS

- College students drug use is above average
- There are knowledge gaps regarding health risks of drug use
 - Assuming that a white powder is cocaine
 - Assuming that more MDMA automatically leads to a better effect
 - Underestimating water intoxication
 - Underestimating dangers of combining different drugs and alcohol
- Ideal opportunity for prevention activities in the introduction period:
 - Make accurate knowledge and testing really accessible (peer education?)
 - Zoom in on student societies

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

REFERENCES

- Prevalence drug use young adults:
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 - Van den Bos, A., Sijstra, M.S., & Bieleman, B. (2017). Partydrugs en studenten: gebruik en kennis van den risico's. *Verslaving*, 13, 226 – 238.
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