

# 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)
<b>XTC</b>	1.7	7.1	<b>13.1</b>
<b>Cocaine</b>	2.1	4.5	<b>7.9</b>
<b>Amphetamine</b>	1.0	3.9	<b>6.0</b>

## 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	<b>25.6</b>	<b>20.0</b>
Cocaine	2.1	4.5	7.9	<b>11.7</b>	<b>11.3</b>
Amphetamine	1.0	3.9	6.0	<b>9.8</b>	<b>7.2</b>
Ketamine					<b>4.7</b>
GHB					<b>1.0</b>

# 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”



# RISKPERCEPTION: 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 raveparty 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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