

SURVEY ON ALCOHOL AND OTHER  
DRUGS IN SPAIN (BY AGES),  
1995-2022

# EDADES 2022

## Executive Summary



GOBIERNO  
DE ESPAÑA

MINISTERIO  
DE SANIDAD

SECRETARÍA GENERAL  
DE SANIDAD

DELEGACIÓN DEL GOBIERNO  
PARA EL PLAN NACIONAL  
SOBRE DROGAS

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

In 2022, continuing with the series of biennial periodicity initiated in 1995, the Government Delegation for the National Plan on Drugs<sup>(1)</sup> has carried out the fourteenth edition of the *Household Survey on Alcohol and Drugs in Spain* (EDADES). This survey has been conducted throughout the national territory among the general population residing in households (15-64 years old), and is carried out at home. In 2022, the sample was 26,344 people.

The main goal is to obtain information that will allow the design, development and evaluation of adequate strategies and policies aimed at preventing drug use and addressing the negative consequences of drug use, misuse of technologies and other related behaviors.

The specific and common objectives of the entire series of surveys are to know the following:

- Prevalence of use of different psychoactive drugs and other related behaviors.
- Sociodemographic characteristics of users.
- Use patterns of psychoactive substances.
- The availability of drugs as perceived by the population and the perceived risk of various consumption behaviors.
- The visibility of drug problems in the place where respondents live.
- The population's opinion about the importance of drug problems and measures to reduce them.
- The evolution over time (since 1995) of the aforementioned aspects.

<sup>(1)</sup> *Delegación del Gobierno para el Plan Nacional sobre Drogas*

## 2. MAIN FINDINGS

*The main results of the EDADES 2022 survey are shown below:*

Prevalence of use and distribution by age and gender.

- Among the population aged 15-64 years, the drugs with the highest prevalence of use, in the last 12 months, are alcohol (76.4%), tobacco (39.0%) and hypnotosedatives -with or without prescription- (13.1%), followed by cannabis (10.6%) and cocaine -powder and/or base- (2.4%). Compared to 2020, the use of hypnotosedatives increased and the use of tobacco and alcohol decreased slightly.
- The age of onset of drug use remains stable. The earliest onset is for alcohol (16.5 years) and tobacco (16.6 years). The latest onset continues to be for opioid analgesics -with or without prescription- (35.3 years) and hypnotosedatives -with or without prescription- (35.0 years).
- Prevalence of use within the last 12 months is higher in the 15-34 age group, except in the case of potentially addictive drugs (hypnotosedatives and opioid analgesics), for which use increases after the age of 35.
- As for differences by gender, the results (use within the last 12 months) confirm higher use among men (except for hypnotosedatives and opioid analgesics). The most significant differences were found for alcohol, tobacco, cocaine and cannabis.

### Use by drug type

#### 2.1. Alcoholic drinks

- Alcohol remains the most commonly used psychoactive substance. Among respondents aged 15-64 years, 76.4% have used alcohol in the past 12 months (77.2% in 2020), 64.5% in the past 30 days (63.0% in 2020) and 9.0% daily in the past 30 days (8.8% in 2020).
- In relation to heavy drinking, 16.7% of Spaniards aged 15 to 64 admit to having drunk in the last year; this percentage is lower than in 2020 (19.4%). Binge drinking occurs, above all, among young adults aged 15 to 34 years. In this age group, 35.4% of men and 24.1% of women say they have been drunk at least once in the last 12 months, and 6.4% in the last month (6.8% in 2020).

- Binge drinking is a risky drinking pattern clearly on the rise in Spain compared to data from a few years back. 15.4% admit to having used alcohol in the form of binge drinking in the last 30 days, a figure similar to that obtained in 2020 (15.4%). This form of risk consumption is concentrated in the 20 to 24 year-old age group.
- Consumption in "*botellón*" (group drinking in the street) seems to have decreased compared to the past. 7.4% say they have done so in the last year (9.9% in 2020, and 12.6% in 2013).

## 2.2. Tobacco

- In 2022, 69.6% of the population aged 15 to 64 years had used tobacco at some point in their lives, 39.0% in the last year, 37.2% in the last month and 33.1% on a daily basis in the last month.
- Among daily smokers, 64.2% have considered quitting smoking, and 41.9% have considered it and have tried to quit.

## 2.3. Electronic Cigarettes

- 12.1% of people aged 15 to 64 years have used electronic cigarettes at some time in their lives, a percentage higher than that obtained in 2020 (10.5%), and almost double the figure of 6.8% obtained in 2015. The 15-24 age group has the highest prevalence of use: 18.8% have used it once in their lifetime and 9.1% in the last year. The prevalence of use –sometime in life– is higher in men for all age groups.

## 2.4. Hypnotosedatives -with or without prescription-

- The use of hypnotosedatives -with or without prescription- has increased again to 23.5% continuing the increasing trend started in 2018. In 2022, 13.1% of people aged 15 to 64 years admit to having used them in the last 12 months, and the proportion is higher in women (16.0%) than in men (10.3%).

## 2.5. Opioid Analgesics

- In the EDADES survey conducted in 2008, the use of opioid analgesics was asked nationally for the first time. In 2022, 15.8% of people aged 15 to 64 years had used them at some point in their lives, 6.8% in the last 12 months and 4.0% in the last 30 days. There has been an

increase in its use, attributable to greater medical prescription. The most commonly used opioid analgesics are tramadol and codeine.

- 56.5% of the population aged 15 to 64 years who have used opioid analgesics at some point in their lives stated that they started taking them in order to treat acute pain.
- Women use opioid analgesics in greater proportion than men for all time periods (ever in life, last 12 months and last 30 days). Consumption is also more frequent in older age groups.

## 2.6. Cannabis

- Cannabis is the illegal substance with the highest prevalence of use in Spain among the population aged 15-64 years. In 2022, 40.9% have used cannabis once in their lifetime, 10.6% in the last 12 months, 8.6% in the last 30 days and 2.8% on a daily basis in the last month. In recent years, occasional use appears stable, but daily use has increased from 1.7% in 2007 to 2.8% in 2022.
- By age, the prevalence of use is higher in the 15-24 age group. 22.6% of young people in this age group used cannabis in the last 12 months (27.2% of young men and 17.8% of young women), 17.1% in the last 30 days (21.5% of young men and 12.5% of young women).
- The prevalence of problematic cannabis use (CAST $\geq$ 4) among the population aged 15 to 64 years is 1.9% (3.0% of men and 0.8% of women). Of those aged 15 to 64 years, 21.5% have used cannabis in the last 12 months (24.2% of men and 15.4% of women). These percentages have remained fairly stable among the population in recent years.

## 2.7. Cocaine - powder and/or base-

- In 2022, 12% of the population have used powder and/or base cocaine at some time in their lives, 2.4% in the last 12 months and 1.4% in the last month. The data over time show a certain stability of use, which in young adults is much lower compared to data from fifteen years ago.
- Considering the use within the last 12 months, this is higher among men than among women (3.6% vs. 1.1%, respectively), and the highest prevalence is recorded in the group of men aged 35 to 44 years, with a total prevalence of 5.3%.
- The average age of onset of powder cocaine use is 21.1 years.

## 2.8. Heroin

- In this survey, heroin use has stabilized: in 2022, 0.6% of the population aged 15-64 years had tried it once in their lifetime and 0.1% in the last year.
- The average age of onset is 21.2 years, showing a certain decrease with respect to 2020 (22.6 years).

## 2.9. Ecstasy, amphetamines, hallucinogens, and volatile inhalants

- Use of ecstasy, amphetamines, hallucinogens and volatile inhalants are relatively low (use within the last 12 months: 0.8% ecstasy, 0.6% amphetamines, 0.6% hallucinogens and 0.2% volatile inhalants).

## 2.10. New psychoactive substances

- Since 2010, OEDA's<sup>(2)</sup> periodic surveys have included questions on these substances. In 2022, 73.1% of the population aged 15 to 64 years had never heard of them; this percentage was 81.1% in 2020. 1.9% have tried them once in their lives. Use is more frequent among males aged 25 to 34 years (4.5%).

<sup>(2)</sup>*Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions*

## 2.11. Poly-consumption

- 15.5% of the population aged 15 to 64 years has not used any legal or illegal psychoactive substance within the last 12 months; 43.6% report the consumption of a single substance, and 40.9% report poly-drug use (two or more substances). Specifically, 28.1% admit to having used two psychoactive substances in the last 12 months; 9.5% admit to having used three and 3.2% admit to having used four or more psychoactive substances.
- Poly-consumption is more prevalent in men than in women in all age groups.
- Alcohol is present in at least 94.4% of poly-drug users and cannabis is present in 61.4% of those who have used three psychoactive substances (practically all of them also use alcohol and tobacco).

## 2.12. Risk perception

- As in previous surveys, the perception of risk is greater in the case of more frequent use, also among women. Risk perception is generalized in the use of illegal substances, as well as tobacco, hypnotosedatives and opioid analgesics. Risk perception for alcohol use is relatively low, despite having increased in the last years.
- Approximately 65% of the population between 15 and 64 years of age perceives gambling with money on a weekly basis as a risk, a figure that has been reduced compared to data from 2020.

## 2.13. Availability perception

- As in 2020, there is a general decline in the perceived availability of drugs (cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine, heroin and hypnotosedatives). This decline continues a trend that began a decade ago.
- For all substances, men describe a higher perception of availability than women.
- Cannabis is the illegal substance perceived as the most accessible (56.9% believe they could get it easily or very easily within 24 hours). In second place is powder cocaine (40.3%). For the other substances, the perception is much lower. These perceptions reproduce, to a certain extent, the frequency of use.
- As for obtaining hypnotosedatives and opioid analgesics without a prescription, 27.9% and 26.0%, respectively, believe that they could easily/very easily obtain them within 24 hours.

## 2.14 Opinions on how to solve the drug problem

- Citizens consider that the most important measures to solve the drug problem are education (88.3%), voluntary treatment for users (81.6%), and publicity campaigns (79.6%). Among the least popular measures are the legalization of all drugs (19.7% consider this to be a very important measure) and the legalization of cannabis (33.8%). These last two options have lost support with respect to data from 2020 (when they were 24.8% and 36.5%, respectively).



## 2.15. Behavioral addictions

- Based on the 2017-2024 Strategy of the National Plan on Drugs<sup>(3)</sup> (PNSD), a series of questions related to behavioral addictions, such as gambling disorder involving money, were included in the EDADES 2020 and subsequent surveys. Questions related to other behaviors of interest that are not recognized as addictions, such as compulsive internet use, were also included.
- 58.1% of the population aged 15 to 64 years have gambled with money -online and/or on-site- within the last 12 months; 57.4% on-site (59.2% of men and 55.5% of women) and 5.3% online (8.0% of men and 2.5% of women), showing a decrease in the frequency of gambling with respect to data from 2020 (64.2% gambled with money online and/or on-site; 63.6% on-site and 6.7% online).
- Based on the results of the EDADES 2022 survey, it is estimated that 1.7% of the Spanish population aged 15-64 years could present a pattern of potential problem with gambling or a gambling disorder (DSM-5  $\geq 1$ ). The value is higher among men than among women (2.4% among men vs 0.9% among women) and has decreased with respect to data from 2020, when such prevalence was 2.2%.
- Specifically, 1.3% of individuals would engage in possible problem gambling (DSM-5  $\geq 1$  and  $< 4$ ) and 0.4% would present with a possible gambling disorder (DSM-5  $\geq 4$ ).
- 3.5% of the population reports compulsive use of the Internet (CIUS  $\geq 28$  points). Although this is not recognized as an addiction, it is of interest to monitor it. It is almost the same among women as among men (3.6% vs 3.4% respectively), and we can appreciate a slight decrease in this indicator (3.7% in 2020).

<sup>(3)</sup>*Plan Nacional sobre Drogas*

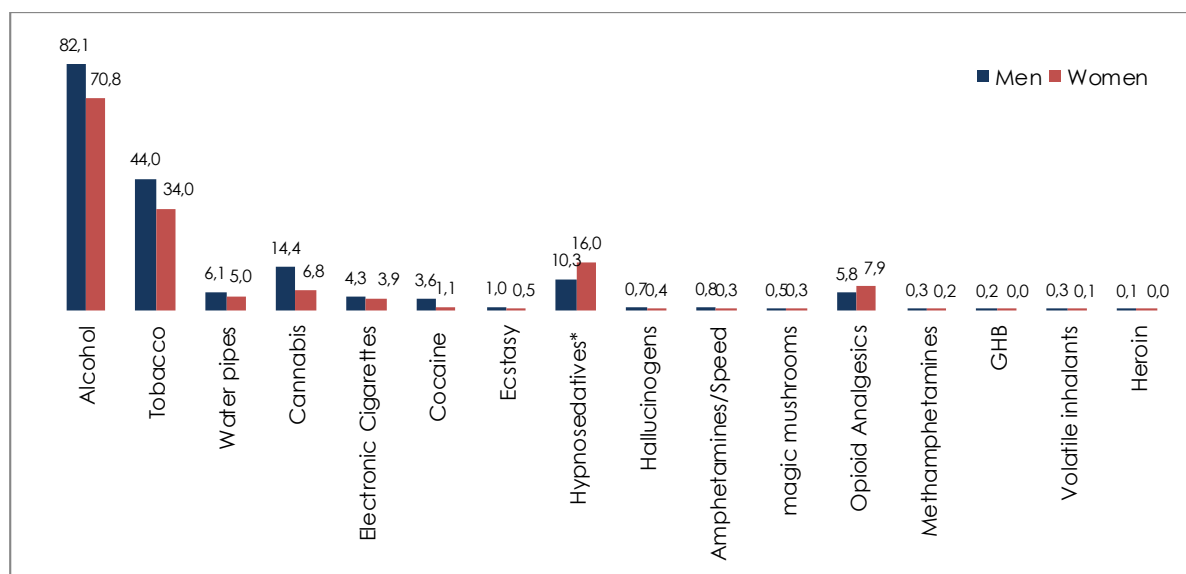
## 2.16. Mental Health

- The EDADES 2022 survey included a series of questions related to the risk of suicide, with the aim of improving knowledge of perceptions regarding this problem in our society. Moreover, the questionnaire included an information leaflet with telephone numbers and web pages for those people with drug or addiction problems or people who have had suicidal thoughts.

- In 2022, 1.9% of the population aged 15 to 64 years have thought about committing suicide, 1.0% have planned it and 0.4% admit to having made a suicide attempt. The percentage is higher among women in terms of having suicidal thoughts or having planned suicide. On the other hand, no gender differences are observed in terms of suicide attempts.
- People with such risks make use of all psychoactive substances to a greater extent compared to the general population, and are more likely to have had some type of psychiatric pathology.

## 2.17. Graphic: Prevalence of use within the last 12 months by gender

**Prevalence of psychoactive substances use within the last 12 months in the population aged 15-64 years by gender (%). Spain, 2022.**



Source: OEDA. DGPNSD. Survey on Alcohol and Drugs in Spain (EDADES).

\*\* powder and/or base

\* with or without prescription

