

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY · REPORT 2023 · SPANISH OBSERVATORY
OF DRUGS AND ADDICTIONS**

The primary function of the **Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (OEDA)** is to provide an overview of the characteristics and problems associated with the consumption of psychoactive substances (including alcohol, tobacco, hypnotosedatives, illegal drugs and new substances), as well as non-substance addictions (including gambling and the Internet).

This Executive Summary contains, in abbreviated form, the main and most relevant data of the information contained in the *2023 Report. Alcohol, Tobacco and Illicit Drugs in Spain*. The information is grouped under the following headings:

- Survey on alcohol and drugs in Spain. EDADES, 2022.
- Treatment for drug use. Spain, 2021.
- Hospital emergencies in drug users. Spain, 2021.
- Drug-related mortality. Spain, 2021.
- Infections in drug users. Spain, 2021.
- Problematic drug use. Spain, 2021.
- Spanish Early Warning System (SEAT), 2022.
- Drug supply and control measures, 2022.
- Wastewater analysis for epidemiological purposes, 2021.

Complementary and previous years' information available at:
<https://pnsd.sanidad.gob.es/profesionales/sistemasInformacion/home.htm>

SURVEY ON ALCOHOL AND DRUGS IN THE GENERAL POPULATION IN SPAIN
EDADES, 2022

In 2022, the drugs with the highest prevalence of use in the Spanish population aged 15-64 years, in the last 12 months, are alcohol, tobacco and hypnotosedatives with or without prescription, followed by cannabis and cocaine. The age of onset of consumption remains stable. The substances that are started at an earlier age are alcohol and tobacco, followed by cannabis. The substances that tend to be started at a later age are opioid analgesics and hypnotosedatives.

Prevalences of consumption (last year) are higher in the 15-34 age group, except for drugs with addictive potential (hypnotosedatives and opioid analgesics), where the highest prevalences are in the older age groups. In 2022, the data confirm higher consumption among men (except for hypnotosedatives and opioid analgesics). These differences are accentuated for alcohol, tobacco, cocaine and cannabis.

Alcohol continues to be the most widely consumed psychoactive substance. Among 15-64 year old population, 76.4% have consumed alcohol in the last 12 months (77.2% in 2020), 64.5% in the last 30 days (63.0% in 2020) and 9.0% daily in the last 30 days (8.8% in 2020).

Characteristics of consumers of alcoholic beverages in the past 30 days	
Prevalence of consumption	64,5%
Sex	56.9% are men
Age group with the highest consumption	68.2% (25-34 years old)
Type of beverage (in the last 7 days)	Beer: 40.3%; Wine: 20.6%; Combined: 14.0%.

In relation to intensive consumption, 16.7% of Spaniards aged 15 to 64 years say they have been **drunk** in the last year; this percentage is lower than in 2020 (19.4%). 6.4% report having been drunk in the past month (6.8% in 2020). Binge drinking occurs mainly among young adults aged 15 to 34 years. In this age group, 35.4% of men and 24.1% of women report having been drunk at least once in the last 12 months.

Binge drinking is a risky drinking pattern that is more frequent today than years ago in Spain. 15.4% say they have consumed 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 20-24 age group.

Drinking in **“botellón”** appears 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).

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

Characteristics of daily tobacco users	
Prevalence of consumption	33,1%
Sex	57.2% are men
Age group with the highest consumption	36.8% (45 to 54 years old)
Type	Cigarettes: 71.9%, rolling tobacco: 19.2% and both types: 8.9%.

In 2022, 12.1% of the population aged 15 to 64 have consumed **e-cigarettes** at some time in their lives, a higher percentage than that obtained in 2020 (10.5%), and almost double the 6.8% in 2015. The 15-24 age group is the one with the highest prevalence of consumption: 18.8% have consumed it once in their lifetime and 9.1% in the last year. The prevalence of ever use is higher in men for all age groups.

As for **prescription and non-prescription hypnosedatives**, their consumption has increased again continuing the upward trend started in 2018 to 23.5%. In 2022, 13.1% of people aged 15 to 64 years have consumed them in the last 12 months, and the proportion is higher among women (16.0%) than men (10.3%)

Characteristics of hypnosedative users in the past 12 months	
Prevalence of consumption	13.1%
Sex	60.7% are women
Age group with the highest consumption	20.0% (55 to 64 years old)

Regarding **prescription and non-prescription opioid analgesics**, in 2022, 15.8% of people aged 15 to 64 years have consumed them at some time in their lives, 6.8% in the last 12 months and 4.0% in the last 30 days. There has been an increase in their 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 consumed opioid analgesics at some time in their lives stated that they started taking them for acute pain.

Women consume opioid analgesics with or without prescription 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. However, with respect to the use of opioid analgesics without prescription, prevalences are higher in men in all time periods.

Cannabis is the illegal substance with the highest prevalence of use in Spain among the population aged 15 to 64. In 2022, 40.9% of people in this group of age, have used cannabis once in their lifetime, 10.6% in the last 12 months, 8.6% in the last 30 days and 2.8% daily in the last month. In recent years occasional use appears stable, but daily use has increased to 2.8% in 2022 from 1.7% in 2007. The same occurs for sporadic once-in-a-lifetime consumption, which has increased from 30.4% in 2013 to 40.9% in 2022 (10.5%).

Characteristics of cannabis users in the past 30 days	
Prevalence of consumption	8,6%
Sexo	69.9% are men
Age group with the highest consumption	17.1% (15 and 24 years old)
Type of cannabis consumed	Marijuana: 49.0% Hashish: 21.9% Hashish + marijuana: 29.1% Cannabis + tobacco: 88.1%

In 2022, 12% of the population have used **powder and/or base cocaine** in their lifetime, 2.4% has used powder and/or base cocaine in the last 12 months and 1.4% in the last month. The data over time show a certain stability of consumption, which in young adults is considerably lower than fifteen years ago. Except in the "ever in a lifetime" time bracket, where there seems to be an increase in prevalence since 2015.

In terms of consumption in the last 12 months, consumption is higher among men than among women (3.6% vs. 1.1%), with the highest prevalence among men between 35 and 44 years of age, with a total prevalence of 5.3%.

The average age of onset of powder cocaine use was 21.1 years.

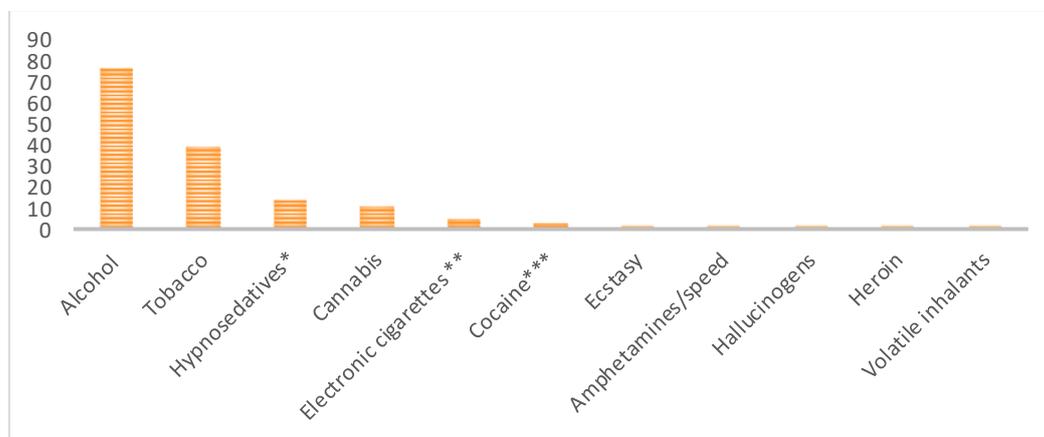
Characteristics of cocaine (powder and/or base) users in the last 12 months	
Prevalence of consumption	2,4%
Sex	76.8% are men
Age group with the highest consumption	3.3% (25 and 34 years old)
Type	Mostly in powder form

Heroin use seems to have stabilized: in 2022, 0.6% of the population aged 15-64 years have tried heroin at some time in their lives and 0.1% in the last year.

The average age of onset is 21.2 years, with some decrease compared to 2020 (22.6 years).

In 2022, use of **ecstasy, amphetamines, hallucinogens and volatile inhalants** are at relatively low levels. Use in the last 12 months: 0.8% ecstasy, 0.6% amphetamines, 0.6% hallucinogens and 0.2% volatile inhalants.

Percentage of consumers, in the last 12 months, among the population aged 15 to 64 years. Spain, 2022



* Hypnotosedatives with or without prescription. ** Electronic cigarettes (with or without nicotine). *** Cocaine powder and/or base.

SOURCE: Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (OEDA). EDADES.

New psychoactive substances (NPS) are considered to be those that mimic the effect of illegal drugs (cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy...). These new substances (keta, spice, synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic marijuana, meow meow, flakka, superman, cathinones, mephedrone, fentanyl derivatives, methoxetamine, NBOMe, ayahuasca, kratom...) can be presented in the form of herbs, pills, powders, liquids, incense...

In 2022, 73.1% of the population aged 15 to 64 years have never heard of them; this percentage was 81.1% in 2020. 1.9% have tried them once in their lives. Consumption is more frequent among males aged 25 to 34 years (4.5%).

15.5% of the population aged 15 to 64 years have not consumed any legal or illegal psychoactive substance in the last 12 months, 43.6% report the consumption of a single substance, and 40.9% report **poly-consumption (two or more substances)**. Specifically, 28.1% report having consumed two psychoactive substances in the last 12 months, 9.5% report having taken three, and 3.2% report the consumption of four or more psychoactive substances.

Poly-drug use is more prevalent in men than in women in all age groups.

Alcohol is present in at least 94.4% of polydrug users and cannabis in 61.4% of those who have used three psychoactive substances (practically all of them also use alcohol and tobacco).

The **perception of risk for drug use** is higher for more frequent use, and also in women. Risk perception is generalized for the use of illegal substances, as well as tobacco, hypnotosedatives and opioid analgesics. Risk perception for alcohol consumption is relatively low, despite having increased. Approximately 65% of the population aged 15 to 64 years perceives gambling with money on a weekly basis as a risk, datum that has been reduced with respect to 2020.

With respect to the **perception of availability**, as was the case in 2020, in 2022 there was a general decline in the perception of 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.

The illegal substance perceived as most accessible is cannabis (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 to some extent reproduce the frequency of use.

In relation to the obtention of 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.

Considering **actions to solve the drug problem**, citizens consider that the most important measures to solve the drug problem are training (88.3%), voluntary treatment for consumers (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 2020 (when they were 24.8% and 36.5% respectively).

Based on the 2017-2024 Strategy of the National Plan on Drugs (PNSD), a series of questions related to **behavioral addictions**, such as gambling disorder with 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 15-64 years had gambled with money online and/or face-to-face in the last 12 months, 57.4% face-to-face (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 money with respect to 2020 (64.2% gambled with money online and/or face-to-face, 63.6% face-to-face, 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 possible problem with gambling or a gambling disorder (DSM-5 ≥ 1). The value is higher in men than in women (2.4% in men vs 0.9% in women) and has decreased with respect to 2020, when such prevalence was 2.2%.

Specifically, 1.3% of individuals would engage in possible problem gambling (DSM-5 ≥ 1 and < 4) and 0.4% would present with a possible gambling disorder (DSM-5 ≥ 4).

3.5% of the population reports compulsive use of the Internet (CIUS ≥ 28 points). Although this is not recognized as an addiction, it is of interest to monitor it. It is almost the same in women as in men (3.6% vs. 3.4% respectively), and a slight decrease in this indicator can be seen (3.7% in 2020).

Finally, a series of questions related to **suicide risk** were included in the EDADES 2022 survey, with the aim of improving knowledge of perceptions regarding this problem in our society. On the other hand, with the questionnaire was included an informative leaflet with telephone numbers and web pages for those people with drug or addiction problems or people who have had suicidal ideations.

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% say they have made an attempt. The percentage is higher in women in terms of having ideas of doing it and planning it, on the other hand, no differences by gender are observed in suicide attempts.

Individuals with such risks consume all psychoactive substances to a greater extent than the general population, and are more likely to have had some type of psychiatric pathology.

TREATMENT FOR DRUG USE. SPAIN, 2021

In 2021, 44,347 admissions to treatment for psychoactive substance abuse or dependence (excluding alcohol and tobacco) were recorded in Spain. This figure represents an increase of 15% compared to 2020, but without reaching the figures prior to the years before the COVID pandemic. In both 2020 and the first half of 2021, due to mobility restrictions and the closure of some facilities for several months following the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a reduction in treatment admissions.

The profile of treatment admissions has undergone notable changes over time. While, during the early 2000s, heroin was the substance that generated the highest number of treatment demands, from 2004 onwards there was a decline in demands for heroin, in parallel with a significant increase in the number of demands for treatment admissions for cocaine, which peaked in 2008. On the other hand, cannabis gradually became more relevant, showing an increase in admissions that reached its highest value in 2013.

In 2021, **cocaine** remained the illegal **drug that caused the highest number of treatment admissions** (46.8% of the total), followed by cannabis (27.8%) and opioids (19.2%).

Among those admitted to treatment **for the first time in life (first admissions)**, cannabis had been the substance that generated the most first admissions to treatment; however, in 2017, cocaine surpassed cannabis in number of admissions, a situation that is confirmed in 2021, ranking as the illegal substance that caused the highest number of first admissions to treatment (45.3%), followed by cannabis (36.3%) and opioids (10.5%)

Following the trends that had been observed in 2021, the majority of patients admitted to treatment for illicit drug abuse or dependence were male (82.1%). The mean age was 36.9 years for all admissions, with no clear differences according to sex and confirming the upward trend that had been observed. The mean age among the first admissions to treatment was 34.4 years. Of all those admitted, 13% were born outside Spain, the highest value in the historical series.

In Spain, the vast majority (87.7%) of patients admitted to treatment for illicit drugs lived in family homes (houses or apartments), 7.7% lived in institutions and 2.9% had precarious or unstable housing. The most frequent model of cohabitation is the family of origin/with their parents or their own family (spouse and/or children).

More than half (56.9%) of the patients started treatment on their own initiative or were encouraged by relatives or friends. Nevertheless, the public health system (hospitals or other health services/general practitioner/primary health care and other drug addiction services) referred to treatment approximately one quarter of those admitted (24.9%).

In 2021, among those admitted to treatment for any of the substances considered, **9.5% had injected at some time in their lives**, confirming the downward trend since records began in the 1990s and reaching the lowest figure in the historical series.

In 2021, 20,741 treatment admissions for **cocaine** were recorded, of which 17,989 were for cocaine powder and 2,719 for cocaine base.

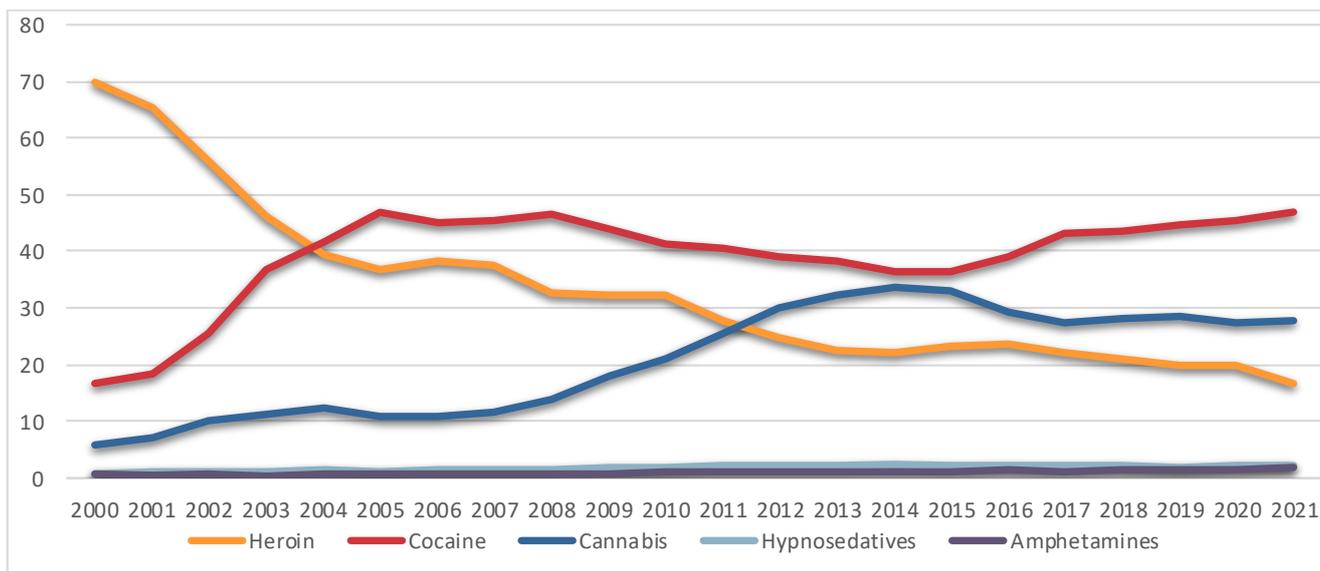
The total number of admissions to treatment for **cannabis** use in 2021 was 12,350. It is important to note the **weight of cannabis among minors seeking treatment** for abuse or dependence on psychoactive substances in Spain. Thus, 93.7% of all minors under 18 years of age who have been treated for illegal drug use in 2021 in our country, have done so because of problems associated with cannabis use.

In 2021, 8,518 persons were admitted to treatment for **opioid** use, of which 7,419 were for **heroin**, 335 for **methadone** and 764 for **other opioids**.

In addition to illicit substances, 25,140 admissions to treatment for alcohol were reported in 2021.

Evolution of the weight of each substance in total treatment admissions for illicit drugs (percentage).

Spain, 2000-2021



SOURCE: Treatment admission indicator for psychoactive substance use. Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (OEDA).

HOSPITAL EMERGENCIES IN DRUG USERS. SPAIN, 2021

In 2021, 6,209 emergency episodes related to non-therapeutic or non-medical use of any drug were reported.

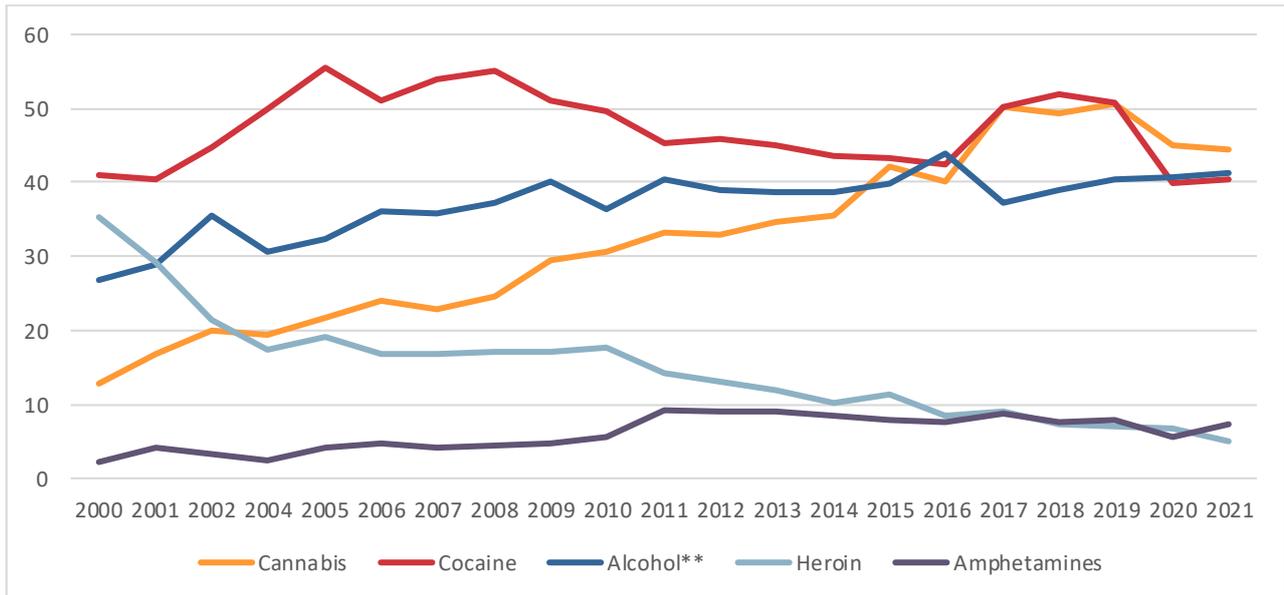
The pandemic situation experienced in the country as a result of the COVID in 2020 had an impact on drug-related emergencies, and although the substances that generated the most emergency episodes remained the same, being cannabis, cocaine and hypnosedatives, the weight of these substances in emergencies showed a great change with respect to what had been observed. In 2021, the changes of 2020 were maintained, with a stabilization of the decrease in emergencies due to cocaine and cannabis and confirmation of the increase in emergencies due to hypnosedatives.

The proportion of women has shown a certain upward trend, reaching its highest historical value in 2021 (30.6%); there has also been an increase in the average age of those attended in the ER from 27.8 years (1996) to 36.1 years (2021).

The resolution of the emergency has not varied significantly over the years, with the patient being discharged most frequently.

Currently the monitoring of New Psychoactive Substances in Spain is done through the Spanish Early Warning System, but in 2021, 8 emergencies related to mephedrone have been reported (16 in 2020). <https://pnsd.sanidad.gob.es/profesionales/sistemasAlerta/home.htm>

Evolution of the weight of each substance in the total number of hospital emergencies related to drug use (percentage). Spain*, 2000-2021



* Spanish regions that report to the Emergency Indicator.

** Alcohol is only recorded when it appears accompanied by another substances

SOURCE: Indicator of Hospital Emergencies in users of psychoactive substances. Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (OEDA).

In 2021, the emergency protocol was revised, introducing, among the changes, the recording of alcohol and hypnosedative emergencies as the only substances responsible for emergencies.

Adding alcohol and hypnosedative emergencies as single substances, 12,476 hospital emergency episodes related to non-medical or non-therapeutic drug use were reported to the indicator in 2021. Alcohol and hypnosedatives are the substances that generate most of the emergencies, above illegal substances.

In 2021, information on the symptoms that generate the emergency episode was obtained for the first time, as well as information on the type of consumption carried out and previous psychiatric pathologies. The results show that the majority of emergencies occur in habitual users and 47.2% have a previous psychiatric pathology.

Analysis by groups of substances allows the detection of differences in consumption patterns as well as in sociodemographic and health characteristics.

DRUG-RELATED MORTALITY. SPAIN, 2021

In 2021, 1,046 deaths were reported to the Specific Registry of Mortality due to acute reaction to psychoactive substances. Of these, toxicological information disaggregated by type of substance is available for 910.

Due to widespread concern about the increasing age of consumers, in 2020 for the first time, age limits were removed from this indicator, recording all cases that met criteria, regardless of age

In 2021, 78.0% of deaths were male, a male predominance that has been present throughout the historical series. The average age of the deceased was 46.7 years, it has remained above 44 years since 2016. As had been occurring in recent years, in 2021, 74.8% of the deceased were over 40 years of age; this is the highest percentage in the historical series (possibly justified by the elimination of age limits in the indicator) and confirms the increase in the average age of the deceased. 26.9% of the deceased showed evidence of suicide, this percentage was much higher among women (50.3%) than among men (19.7%).

Taking into account the limitations of the approximation, it could be said that, in 2021, the profile of the persons who died due to an acute reaction to psychoactive substances, as observed since 2014, is that of **a man over 47 years of age, single, who did not die due to previous pathology aggravated by the consumption of psychoactive substances, with negative HIV serology, who has recently consumed a substance (preferably hypnosedatives, opioids and cocaine), but who does not show recent signs of venipuncture**. It should be noted that, prior to 2014, the deceased persons had a lower average age, had a much higher percentage of positive HIV serology and showed a greater number of recent signs of venipuncture.

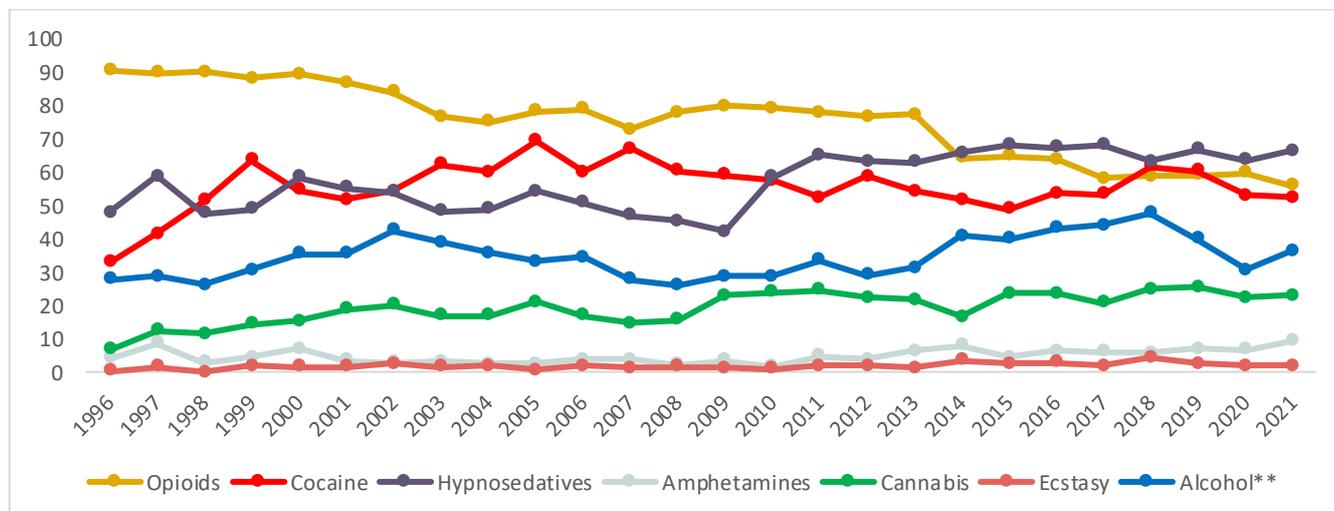
In terms of trends, there has been an increase in hypnosedatives and alcohol, a slight decrease in opioids and a stabilization of cannabis and cocaine.

In 2021, **opioids** were detected in 55.7% of deaths due to acute drug reaction. Methadone was present in 29.3% of deaths in 2021, being the only opioid in 18.7% of cases, regardless of whether other substances from other groups were identified.

Hypnosedatives appear in 2021 together with other substances, generally opioids, cocaine and alcohol. Only in 2.2% of deaths were the only substance detected, 85.0% of which were cases reported as suicides.

Cocaine is present in 52.4% of deaths due to acute drug reaction in 2021. Among the decedents in whom cocaine is identified, opioids are present in 62.4%. In only 11.3% of deaths in which cocaine is detected, cocaine is the only substance detected.

Percentage of deaths in which each substance is detected in relation to the total number of deaths (with toxicological information) due to acute reaction after consumption of psychoactive substances. Spain*, 1996-2021



* Data are included for all geographic areas monitored by the indicator and the cases in which a substance has been detected

** Alcohol is only recorded when it appears together with another substance

SOURCE: Mortality due to acute reaction to psychoactive substances Indicator. Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (OEDA)

Cannabis is present in 22.9% of deaths due to acute drug reaction in 2021. In 2021, 208 deaths were reported in which cannabis was present, in 8 cases as the sole substance and, regardless of the detection of other substances, with alcohol in 31.7% of these cases, with cocaine in 54.3%, with hypnosedatives in 59.6% and with opioids in 60.6%.

According to mortality analysis using the General Mortality Register, in 2021 there were 450,744 deaths in Spain and 820 deaths were registered under the selected ICD-10 codes. Throughout the period 1999-2021, the male predominance maintained throughout the historical series can be seen (in 2021, 75% are men). The distribution of deaths according to age shows an upward trend in the average age of the deceased (in 2021, 83.5% were aged 35 years or older).

INFECTIONS IN DRUG USERS. SPAIN, 2021

In 2021, 2,786 new cases of HIV were diagnosed in Spain (estimated rate after adjustment for notification delay 7.41/100,000 inhabitants). The most frequent transmission mechanism was risky sex between men with men (56.3) and risky sex between heterosexuals (25.4); infection as a result of parenteral drug use was much less frequent (1.6%). In the last 11 years, injected drug use has represented the lowest percentage with respect to other mechanisms of HIV infection transmission.

In 2021, the prevalence of infection, among the total number of those admitted to treatment (44,347), is 3.0% for HIV, 4.0% for hepatitis C virus and 0.4% for hepatitis B virus (HBsAg positive-chronic carrier).

Among those who had injected in the last 12 months prior to admission to treatment (1.119): 68.5% knew their HIV status and of these 34.2% were HIV-infected; 66.6% knew their hepatitis C status and of these 43.6% had positive serology for hepatitis C virus; 35.7% knew their hepatitis B status and of these 4.0% had positive serology for hepatitis B (HBsAg positive-chronic carrier).

PROBLEMATIC DRUG USE. SPAIN, 2021

In 2022, 6.0% of the population aged 15-64 years (approximately 1,900,000) have had a risky alcohol consumption, a value that increases to 8.3% among those who have had an alcoholic drink in the last year (AUDIT \geq 8 points in men and AUDIT \geq 6 points in women). This **risk drinking** in the last year is higher among men (9.2%) than among women (7.2%) and is also higher than average in the 15-24 age group (14.8%). The profile of the at-risk user is that of a male, single, 36 years old, with secondary education, who is working. Thirty-eight point two per cent has used illegal drugs in the last month.

Estimation of the number of problematic users in the population aged 15-64 years, according to substances. Spain, 2021-2022				
	Heroin* (2021)	Alcohol* (2022)	Cannabis* (2022)	Cocaine* (2022)
No. of problematic users	53.319	1.900.000	603.497	104.851

*Heroin: Estimate based on data from treatment admissions using the multiplier method.

*Alcohol: Estimate based on data from the AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) scale \geq 8 Males and \geq 6, Females applied in the EDADES survey, 2022.

*Cannabis: Estimate based on data from the CAST (Cannabis Abuse Screening Test) scale \geq 4, applied in the EDADES survey, 2022.

*Cocaine: Estimate based on frequency of use (30 days or more in the last year).

SOURCE: Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (OEDA).

In 2022, approximately 603,497 people aged 15-64 years are **problematic cannabis users** (score \geq 4 points on the CAST scale), which corresponds to 1.9% of the total population aged 15-64 years, with a higher percentage among men (3%) than among women (0.8%) and among those aged under 34 years (3.4%) than among those aged over 34 years (1.2%). The profile of the problematic cannabis user is that of a man under 34 years of age, with secondary education, working, living with his own family, a polydrug user of other substances and who started using cannabis at the age of 15.9 years..

Among population aged 14-18, 73.173 young people are estimated to be problematic users, which represents 3.0% of the population in this age range and 17.8% of users in the last year.

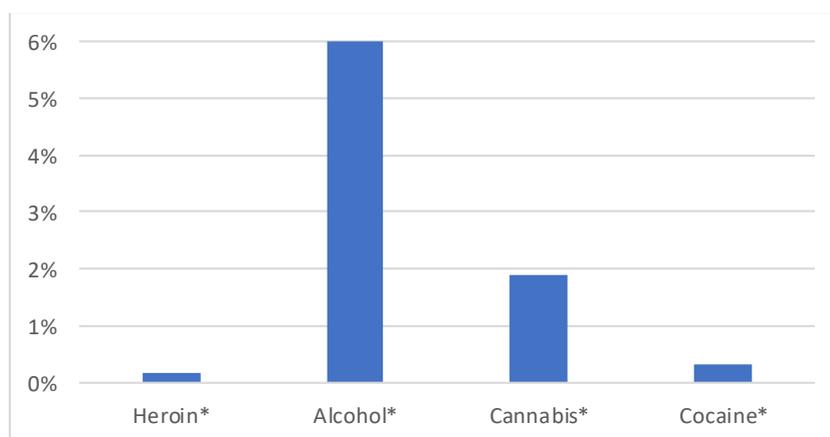
The profile of the at-risk user among students is a Spanish boy, aged 16, with an average family economic situation, with average grades of good or pass, who skips school, and has taken legal drugs in the last 30 days.

The estimated number of **problematic heroin users** in Spain in 2021 is 53,319 (15-64 years), which corresponds to 0.16% of the population in this age range. Estimates show that in 2021 the downward trend that started in 2012 and was broken anecdotally in 2015, is confirmed.

Regarding **cocaine use**, it is estimated that, in Spain, at least 104,851 people are problematic cocaine users (people aged 15-64 years who have used cocaine 30 or more days in the last year), equivalent to 0.33% of the population aged 15-64 years and 14.6% of users in the last year.

Estimate of the percentage of problem users in the population aged 15-64 years, by substance.

Spain, 2021-2022



* Heroin: Estimate based on data from treatment admissions using the multiplier method.

* Alcohol: Estimate based on data from the AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) scale ≥ 8 males and ≥ 6 females applied in the EDADES survey, 2022.

* Cannabis: Estimate based on data from the CAST (Cannabis Abuse Screening Test) scale ≥ 4 , applied in the EDADES survey, 2022.

* Cocaine: Estimate based on frequency of use (30 days or more in the last year).

SOURCE: Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (OEDA).

SPANISH EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (SEAT), 2022

The Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (OEDA) is responsible for the coordination of SEAT, and together with the Centre for Intelligence against Terrorism and Organised Crime (CITCO), is the nodal point of the Network in Spain. It is also part of the European Early Warning System (EWS-Early Warning System) and actively collaborates with it. The general objective of SEAT is to develop and maintain a rapid early warning system for the detection, exchange of information, assessment and

response to the emergence of new psychoactive substances or events related to the use of psychoactive substances, which may generate a public health problem. New psychoactive substances" (NPS) means substances in pure form or in preparations which are not covered by the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, or by the 1971 United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances, but which may pose health or social risks similar to those posed by substances covered by that Convention and the 1971 United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

SEAT is responsible of coordinating actions in this field, at the national level in Spain and, in turn, is the interlocutor with the rest of the organisations responsible of early warning systems at the international level.

In concrete terms, two functions can be identified:

- Identify "new psychoactive substances" (including precursors) circulating in the national territory and disseminate clear and truthful information to the actors involved.
- Detect and disseminate information on fatal and non-fatal consequences related to the use and abuse of psychoactive substances, which may generate a public health problem. These may be due to the use of new substances, but also due to new combinations of psychoactive substances, route of administration, contamination by infectious agents, adulteration, among others.

The information resulting from this system should provide useful information at different levels (drug users, drug professionals, law enforcement/judicial processes, etc.)

Main results of SEAT's activity in 2022

In 2022, 16 NPS were detected for the first time in Spain. They belonged to the following groups: cannabinoids (7), arylcyclohexylamines (3), benzodiazepines (2), opioids (1), phenethylamines (1), arylalkylamines (1), and others (1). Of these, 2 were detected for the first time in Europe.

All the substances have been analysed in reference laboratories with the analytical capacity to identify this type of substances. They come either from seizures made by the State Security Forces and Corps, by the Customs Surveillance Services, or from samples provided by anonymous consumers in public or private leisure environments.

SEAT notification to EU-Early Warning System

- Through the EDND portal (European Database on New Drugs):

The EDND is a system for the continuous reporting of NPS on a case-by-case basis. It is an IT platform that allows to provide at any time, detailed information on a specific event involving the identification of one or more NPS in any of the EU countries.

Throughout 2022, the SEAT network has incorporated a total of 194 case reports into the EDND. Of these, 164 are seizures, 23 are reports of samples collected, 4 are reports of serious adverse events and 3 are reports of biological samples. These 194 case reports include a total of 206 reports of 61 different NPS, belonging to 10 groups of substances. Cathinones constitute the group with the highest number of reports (64) and also the most diverse group, as 14 different substances have been reported, with 3-MMC and 3-CMC being the most reported. The second most notified group is the arylcyclohexylamines, mainly represented by ketamine, which accounts for 48 of the 54 notifications of this group through the EDND.

- Through the Annual Situation Report (ASR):

The ASR is a system that provides timely information from each country to the EWS once a year. It is a document that each country completes with aggregated information on all NPS detected (analytically identified) throughout the year in its territory.

The 2022 ASR included a total of 6,951 cases (detections) in which any of the NPS on the EMCDDA reporting list were identified. Of these, 5,489 were seizures, 65 were samples collected and 1,397 were biological samples (including 1,075 detections in deceased persons). This year, the Spanish ASR includes notifications of 135 different NPS, belonging to 12 different groups according to the EMCDDA classification.

In terms of substance type, arylcyclohexylamines were the most reported group (2,510), due to the large predominance of ketamine, which is the most reported NPS in the ASR (2,398 cases). This is followed in frequency by the "Other" group (1,606 cases), which includes pregabalin (381 cases), quetiapine (286 cases), GHB/GBL (283 cases) and venlafaxine (246 cases) as the most reported substances. The third most reported group of NPS are cathinones (1,480 cases), led by 3-methylmethcathinone (3-MMC) with 580 cases, followed by α -pyrrolidinohexanophenone (α -PHP) with 328 cases and 3-CMC (3-chloromethcathinone) with 214 cases. Other groups of substances such as phenethylamines, mainly represented by 2C-B and opioids, with tramadol being reported almost exclusively, also stand out in terms of frequency.

NPS detected in biological samples of deceased persons were mainly tramadol with 328 reports, quetiapine with 209 and venlafaxine with 207 reports.

Alcoholic beverage sales, 2015-2022

The total volume of alcoholic beverage sales in 2022 stands at 5,764 million litres, the highest level in this historical serie. The evolutionary data point to an upward trend in the total consumption of alcoholic beverages over these years.

The drink with the highest volume of consumption in Spain is beer, which accounts for 70.4% of total alcoholic beverage sales. Wine, including cider, is in second place, accounting for 23.4% of the volume of alcoholic beverage sales. Downstream beverages, which include spirits and liqueurs, account for 5.2% of total sales volume. Intermediate products, which include vermouth and muscatel, have a residual presence of 1.0%. The weight of the different types of alcoholic beverages has been stable throughout the historical series, with beer and wine being the beverages with the highest sales volume in all these years.

With regard to the alcohol content of beverages, the percentages of pure alcohol by beverage type have remained fairly stable between 2015 and 2022. In these years, there is a general upward trend in the volume of alcohol coming from beer, and a stable situation for alcohol coming from derived beverages and intermediate products.

Alcohol tax revenues in 2022 reach the highest values in the historical series studied for all 3 types of alcohol-taxed beverages.

In Spain, beer is the alcoholic beverage that accounts for the highest amount of pure alcohol per capita in the years 2015 to 2022, followed by wine and, at a considerable distance, derived beverages. The trend in pure alcohol per capita follows a general upward trend for all three types of beverages.

Tobacco sales, 2005-2022

Among the types of tobacco products, cigarettes are the variety that has been dominating the market year after year, as their sales volumes, both in monetary value and in physical units, are infinitely higher than those of the other tobacco products. Of the EUR 12,021.912 million tobacco sales volume in 2022, 83.8% was accounted for by cigarettes. Cigarette sales were followed by sales of rolling tobacco, whose market share has been increasing in recent years, rising from 1.7% in 2005 to 9.7% in 2022, and displacing pure cigar sales since 2011, whose share of revenue has remained virtually unchanged in recent years at around 4%. Pipe cigar sales account for 2.5% of total tobacco sales revenue.

In terms of units sold, cigarettes are the leading product among tobacco products, with a sales volume of 2,182.6 million packs of 20 cigarettes in 2022. However, sales of cigarettes have been steadily declining since 2005. In pure cigar sales, from 2013 onwards, a continuous reduction in sales began and continues today, with a cumulative decline of -20.8% between 2013 and 2022, when 1,845.0 million units were sold. In 2022, 6.495 million kilos of rolling tobacco were sold, an increase of 4.4% over the previous year, and 1.888 million kilos of pipe tobacco, 6.6% less than in the previous year.

Number of seizures and quantities of drugs seized, 1998-2022

Cocaine. In the time series, three periods can be distinguished according to the volume of quantities seized: a first period, between 1998 and 2006, which is characterised by a general increasing trend until reaching a peak in 2006 (49,650 kg); a second period between 2006 and 2016, in which there is a significant decrease in the quantities seized until reaching the minimum value of 15,629 kg seized in 2016. Finally, a third period, between 2016 and 2022, shows a significant increase in the quantities seized, reaching a record high of 58,334 kg of cocaine seized in 2022.

Hashish. Between 1998 and 2004, there was a moderate but steady upward trend in the quantities seized, from 428.2 tonnes in 1998 to the highest value in the historical series: 796.8 tonnes in 2004. From then on, they gradually decreased, with 2013 being the year with the lowest seizure volume of the whole series (319.3 tonnes). From 2013 to 2019, the quantities of this substance seized have shown a stable trend of around 350-400 tonnes. Finally, the last three years show large variations in the volume of seized hashish, with 324.7 tonnes seized in 2022.

Heroin. Between 1999 and 2005, the quantities seized tended to decrease, reaching the lowest figure of the whole series (174 kg) in 2005; from 2005 onwards, a more or less stable trend with occasional peaks of growth can be observed. From 2018 to 2022, the quantities of heroin seized remain around 200 kg each year.

Ecstasy (MDMA). Until 2002, the trend of increasing numbers of pills seized was noticeable, with 194,527 pills seized in 1998 and 1,396,140 in 2002. Subsequently, a downward trend in ecstasy seized was observed over the period 2002-2019, with minimum values (ranging between 100,000 and 200,000 pills per year) in 2011-2013 and 2015. Finally, there is a sharp increase in the quantity seized in 2020, reaching the highest value in the historical series (1,561,311 pills), before falling sharply again to 484,757 pills seized in 2022.

Price and purity of seized drugs, 2000-2022

There is an upward trend in the price of **hashish resin**, which, if in 2000 was 3.87 euros, in the second half of 2022 reached 6.36 euros. This has also occurred in the case of **grifa/marijuana** which, in the same period, has risen from 2.49 euros to 5.93 euros (second half of the year).

Similarly, the price of **cocaine**, after a period of decline between 2004 and 2014, showed an upward trend, with the price per gram of cocaine rising from an average price of 57.57 euros in 2014 to 61.27 euros in the second half of 2022.

Regarding the price per gram of **heroin**, from 2000 to 2014 it showed a downward trend, from 66.38 euros in 2000 to 56.92 euros in 2014. Thereafter, the price stabilised at around €57-58 until 2021. In 2022 it has risen again, reaching 60.64 euros per gram in the second half of the year.

As for the gram of **amphetamine powder (speed)**, its price shows a general upward trend over the historical series, from 25.52 euros/gram in 2000 to 28.72 euros/gram in the second half of 2022.

Regarding **ecstasy**, its price has remained relatively stable between approximately 10 and 11.5 euros per unit, with some oscillations, but without a clear upward or downward trend observed throughout the historical series.

Regarding the **average purity of seized drugs**, data are available for heroin and cocaine. Over the entire period 2000-2022, it can be observed that the purity of large seizures (at the kilogram level) is significantly higher than the purity of seizures at the gram or dose level. In fact, in 2022, the purity of large heroin seizures was 42.0% (second half), while the purity of gram-level seizures was 31.0% (second half), and of dose-level seizures 24.0% (second half). For cocaine, the figures were, in the same order, 72.0%; 47.0% and 35.0%.

The "kilogram purity/dosage purity", "kilogram purity/gram purity" and "gram purity/dosage purity" ratios can be used as indicators of the degree of dilution at different links in the chain. In 2022 (second half), the heroin kilogramme/dose purity ratio was 1.75, the kilogramme/gramme ratio 1.35 and the gramme/dose ratio 1.29, while for cocaine the figures were 2.06, 1.53 and 1.34, in the same order. Heroin thus suffers a lower degree of dilution along the distribution chain than cocaine.

Arrested for drug trafficking and complaints of illicit drug consumption and/or possession, 2002-2022

In 2022, there were 28,678 arrests for drug trafficking according to data from the Ministry of the Interior, compared to 27,141 in 2021. Meanwhile, complaints for illicit drug use or possession amounted to 430,975 in 2022, compared to 364,320 in 2021.

The arrests made since 2002 show an upward trend, with the current year 2022 being the year with the highest number of arrests for drug trafficking in the whole series (28,678).

As in previous years, in 2022 most arrests and complaints were related to cannabis derivatives (55.7% and 80.8%, respectively). Arrests for cocaine trafficking also accounted for a significant proportion (23.5%).

WASTE WATER ANALYSIS FOR EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PURPOSES, 2021

Wastewater samples were taken at different Spanish wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) during a full week in the spring of 2021, ensuring that each sample was representative of a full day (24 h composite sample) at a total of 26 WWTPs. In addition, a second campaign was carried out in 9 WWTPs during one week in autumn of the same year.

Cocaine

Cocaine use has been detected in all WWTPs in both campaigns (only one data has been discarded as it was considered an outlier). The weekly median values ranged from 0.7 to 3.9 g/day/1000 inhabitants, with the overall median at 2.0 g/day/1000 inhabitants. These data confirm that cocaine is one of the most widely used illegal substances at the national level, without excessive differences compared to other stimulants.

On the other hand, there is higher use during the weekend, with an increase ranging from 5% to 122%, with the median increase in use being 22%. This pattern is also observed for other recreational stimulants (e.g. MDMA or alcohol, among others).

Cannabis

Cannabis use, as estimated consumption of its main psychoactive constituent, THC, is high, overall median THC: 11 g/day/1000 inhabitant, with its metabolite present in all samples. In this case, no differences were observed between weekday and weekend use patterns, as it is a slowly excreted substance and its use is less differential.

Ecstasy (MDMA)

MDMA has also been detected in almost all samples. However, its use is clearly lower than that of cocaine and cannabis, with an overall median value of 49 mg/day/1000 inhabitant, i.e. about 40 times lower than that of cocaine.

In terms of weekly patterns, MDMA use clearly varies between weekdays and weekends, with a median increase in use of 40%, highlighting its strong recreational character.

Amphetamine

There is a clear differential consumption in the Basque Country with respect to the rest of the areas studied in Spain. The median weekly consumption of amphetamine in the populations corresponding to the EDARs of the Basque Country ranges between 679 and 2,796 mg/day/1000 inhabitants, which is in the order of the consumption of cocaine, in terms of pure active substance.

In the rest of the Spanish regions, estimated amphetamine use is generally low, with up to 8 samples with the median below the detection limit, and the rest with values ranging from 9 to 103 mg/day/1000 inhabitants; overall median: 31 mg/day/1000 inhabitants.

If we study the differences between consumption during the working week and at weekends, we observe that the median increase in consumption in the Basque Country is 19%, compared to 7% in the rest of Spain, which would indicate a higher recreational consumption in this community.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine use in Spain is clearly lower than amphetamine use, as it has not been detected in almost 50 per cent of the EDARs/campaigns analysed. It is also observed that its use is highly localised in the larger metropolitan areas of Catalonia, followed by the area of the Community of Madrid and, at a distance, the Basque Country, the Valencian Community, the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands and other medium-sized localities in Catalonia.

In terms of the weekly pattern, no change is observed between the estimated consumption during the working week and the weekend.

NPS and ketamine

Qualitative NPS analysis of the weekend's composite samples detected phenethylamine 25-C-NBOMe, the cathinones methyone and mephedrone at some of the sites investigated. Their concentrations were too low to provide quantitative data.

Ketamine could be quantified in all but 5 of the weekend composite samples, showing that it is a substance that is having a significant penetration of the illicit market in Spain. The overall median value of estimated weekend use is 64 mg/day/1000 inhabitant.

Alcohol

The median weekly ethanol consumption in the different locations ranges from 4.4 to 22 L/day/1000 inhabitant, with the overall median at 8.8 L/day/1000 inhabitant.

In terms of weekly patterns, ethanol consumption increases in all locations during the weekend, between 4 and 88% (median increase: 45%).

Nicotine

This is the most evenly distributed of all the substances considered. This is logical considering that tobacco is a legal substance with a relatively high prevalence of use. The overall median nicotine consumption is 1700 (ranging from 672 to 2739) mg/day/1000 inhabitant.