European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Drug use and gender: highlights from the latest EMCDDA Drugs workbooks

Inès Aoufi, Joao Matias, Linda Montanari

May 4th, 2022
Experts meeting on the indicator 'Prevalence and patterns of drug use'

Workbook analysis

Objective:

❑ To understand to what extent the drug workbooks include a gender perspective in the analysis of the drug situation

Template for the workbooks:

❑ Includes request of information on gender (not sex)

  ❑ In the summary

  ❑ In the school population

    ❑ "for the school population, it is suggested that lifetime prevalence be used, and trends and gender differences be mentioned"

  ❑ Cannabis, stimulants and opioids general population, recreational setting, other specific target populations

    ❑ "focus on (…) any important demographic breakdowns (e.g., age, gender)"

Analysis of the workbooks

❑ Extraction of information on gender and/or sex breakdown

❑ Extraction of information on relevant gender information and specific population groups incl. LGBTQI+

❑ Extraction by substance and setting

Extraction sheet

Country (by alphabetical order)	SUMMARY	CANNABIS GENERAL POPULATION	CANNABIS SCHOOLS AND OTHER SUB-POPULATIONS	CANNABIS IN RECREATIONAL SETTING	CANNABIS IN OTHER SEPCIFIC TARGET POPULATIONS	CANNABIS TREATMENT	CANNABIS dependent/problem/high risk use and health problems
EMCDDA		EMCCDA RECOMMENDS THE MENTIONNING OF GENDER	EMCCDA RECOMMENDS THE MENTIONNING OF GENDER	EMCCDA RECOMMENDS THE MENTIONNING OF GENDER	EMCCDA RECOMMENDS THE MENTIONNING OF GENDER		
Belgium	Cannabis use is more prevalent amongst men. Gap in the evolution of cannabis use prevalence between men and women: much more pronounced for men due to steep increase in men aged between 15 and 44. Women account for more than 50% of the population that misuse benzodiazepines	LYP: men 10.4% - women 3.7%. Both increased since 2013 but men more -- age group 15-44 big gap in increases between men and women// LMP higher in men 6.7% than in women 1.9%	Decrease in LYP and LMP for both girls and boys but only very striking and significant for girls		MSM: 11.5% reported using cannabis during their last encounter // Chemsex in context of MSM or trans sex workers: 45% of respondents mentionned using cannabis for Chemsex// most frequent after poppers, cocaine and GHB	Women = 19.3% of treatment entrants // average age women =29years and men 28years	problematic use among the general population more frequent in men than women (5.5%/0.5%) // problematic use among the user population: 1 in 2 men - 1 in 5 women// road side testing Flanders: 4% male-3% female; Brussels: 7% male-6% female and Wallonia: 8% male-3% female

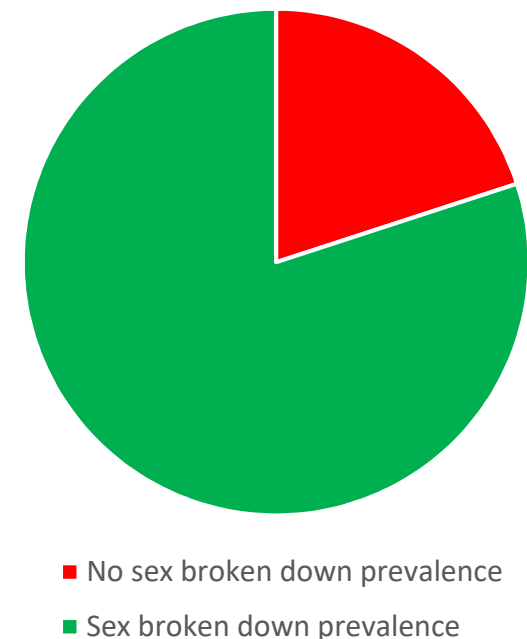# Inclusion of gender and sex in the prevalences

	Quantitative information Prevalence of drug use (reported in text and/or table)	
	Breakdown by sex	Breakdown by gender
Cannabis	23/29	0/29
Stimulants	19/29	0/29
Heroin and other opioids	10/29 1 HR	0/29
NPS	11/29	0/29

Cannabis prevalence

- No clear trends about gender in usage mentioned

- In Spain:

  - Men were more likely than women to smoke both types (marijuana and hashish)

  - 40 % of men and 33.9% of women think that the legislation of cannabis is very important to solve the drugs problem

Prevalence broken down by sex

- No sex broken down prevalence
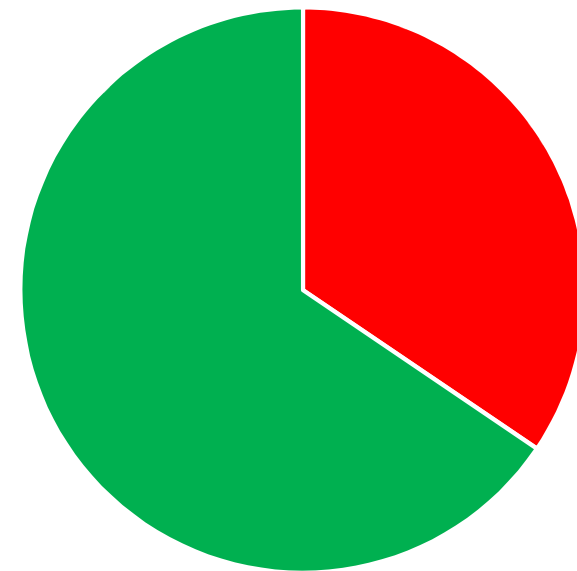- Sex broken down prevalence

Cannabis prevalence

- High-risk or problematic more prevalent in men than women

  - 1 in 2 male users against 1 in 5 female users are problematic users in Belgium, in Spain also more prevalent among males
  - Czech Republic: proportion of high risks users in all age categories higher in males
  - Ireland: CUD prevalence higher in males than in females
  - Netherlands: higher proportion of males are at risk for using cannabis on a (almost) daily basis
  - Slovakia: emergency entrants for problem relating to cannabis use were for 83.2% male

- Cannabis for medical reasons: in Czech Republic LTP grew from 15.2% (12.4% of males, 17.9% of females) in 2016 to 16.4% (14.0% of males and 18.7% of females) in 2020

Stimulants prevalence

- Prevalence by gender for amphetamine use conflicting between countries

  - Lower in females: Norway, Slovenia, Germany

  - Higher in females: Romania

  - Higher in females in younger age group: Bulgaria

Prevalence broken down by sex

- ■ No sex broken down prevalence
- ■ Sex broken down prevalence

Stimulants prevalence

- Austria: prevalence growing at different rates between sexes

    - +1.5% in men and +0.4% in women

- Bulgaria: general population, prevalences are higher in men except for amphetamines

    - Although the prevalence for men in the general population was higher, in the age group 15-34y, both for amphetamine and cocaine, the prevalences of the two groups were equal or higher in women

- Latvia: also higher lifetime prevalence in men in general population but higher current use in females in age group 15-24

- Luxembourg: women tend to start using amphetamines at a younger age than men (19 years – 22years)

- Spain: men are offered stimulants more often than women

- Luxembourg: recreational setting, more males use cocaine than females (15.3% vs 10.1%)

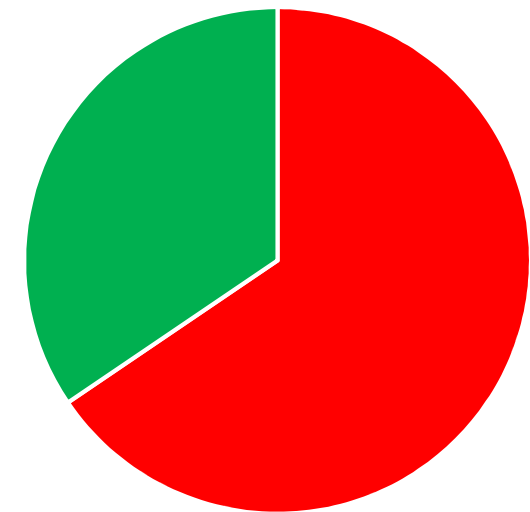- The Netherlands & Romania: more emergency admissions due to cocaine use in males than women

Heroin and other opioids prevalence

- LYP general population was higher in females in Bulgaria but lower in the age group 15-34y

- LTP was lower in females in several countries such as Croatia, Czech Republic and Greece

- LTP is almost equal between sexes in Romania, recent use is more prevalent in women, current use is equal between sexes

- Prevalences are rising in both sexes in Spain

Prevalence broken down by sex

- ■ No sex broken down prevalence
- ■ Sex broken down prevalence
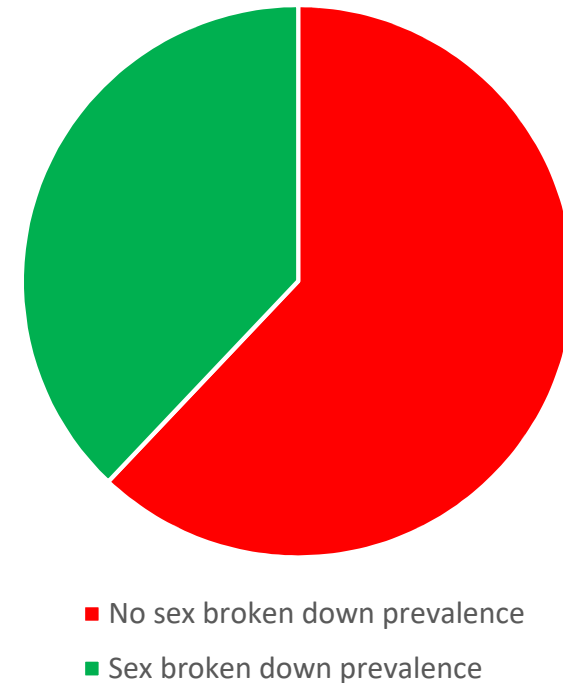
Heroin and other opioids prevalence

- Belgium: increase in use in both sexes
- Portugal: lower prevalence in females but differences are fading
- Spain: being offered heroin or other opioids was more prevalent in males than females
- Spain exposed reasons for the start of the use of opioids
    - Alleviate acute pain (55.4% of men and 59.1% of women)
    - Chronic pain (25.5% of males and 29.7% of females)

- Luxembourg: HRDU 79.8% of males in 2020
- Finland: proportion of women in the high-risk group is larger for opioids than amphetamine (29% vs 20%)
- Pharmaceutical opioids were more prevalent in women than men in both Spain and Sweden

NPS prevalence

- Higher lifetime prevalences in men in the general population were observed in Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal

- Comparable prevalences in the general population in Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic

- Portugal: highest internet acquisition rates in women but usage still lower

- Ireland observed a decrease in usage in both sexes

Prevalence broken down by sex

- No sex broken down prevalence
- Sex broken down prevalence

NPS prevalence

- In Hungary: LTP for Cannabinoids use ± 5x larger in men than women

    - NPS (synthetic cathinone and synthetic cannabinoid) 84.5% of primary NPS users were male

- Use of cannabinoids higher in females in Luxembourg: (LMP: 11.1% vs 7.3% of men) and Slovenia (3.51% vs 1.2%)

- Lithuanian recreational setting, women have higher prevalence of usage of synthetic cathinones

Other drugs: prevalence and trends

- In Czech Republic:

  - LSD, ketamine, inhalants and poppers more prevalent in men
  - psychoactive medicines and misuse of prescription drugs more prevalent in women

- Germany: benzodiazepine and z-drugs significantly more used by women

- Ireland: Sedatives and tranquilisers recent use was more often reported by women

  - females above the age of 65+ had the highest prevalence of use
  - small increase in usage in males in the years 2019/2020

- Norway: GHB/GBL, more prevalent in men

Gender relevant information about some specific groups and behaviours

Assessing the availability of information for:

- Pregnant women
- MSM (Men who have Sex with Men)
- Chemsex
- Sex work
- Non binary and transgender persons
- Others (e.g. IPV)

→ No reporting of qualitative or quantitative data for the last 3 categories for all the countries

Pregnant women

Belgian study:

- The prevalence of narcotic and psychotropic substance users among pregnant women is relatively low (0.3%)

- Most of the women (92.2%; n=555) have never used substances of any kind

- Prior to pregnancy, two women (0.3%; n=2/602), younger than 24, have used marijuana/hashish, but have dropped the habit during pregnancy

MSM

Belgian study:

- 11.5% of MSM reported using cannabis during their last encounter

- Chemsex in the context of MSM or trans sex workers: 45% of respondents mentioned using cannabis for Chemsex

- Cannabis most frequent after poppers, cocaine and GHB

- 21.1% reported reported using MDMA, cocaine or amphetamine in their last sexual encounter

Netherlands:

- Methamphetamine use is uncommon and mostly used in the context of MSM

Specific setting: Chemsex

Spanish study

- A sample in Madrid: 29% engaged in chemsex at least once in the past 12 months
- Among those who had practised chemsex, about 15% reported slamming.
- Types of recreational or illegal drugs used in the last 12 months: most common are poppers followed by cannabis and cocaine (41.1%, 28.3% and 19.4%, respectively).
- 16.5% of participants who have engaged in chemsex in the last 12 months report having experienced a drug overdose, mostly due to GHB or GBL.

Summary

- Prevalence with **sex breakdowns** reported mainly for **cannabis**

- Drug use **trends and patterns** disaggregated by sex mostly presented by **Spain**

- Gender-related information referring to **MSM and chemsex** mainly reported by **Belgium**

- Only **Belgium** reported information about **pregnant women and drug use**

There is a need to incorporate sex and gender-disaggregated information in drugs data

→ Improve gender analysis

→ Better understanding of the drug phenomenon

European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Thank you