
Summary of the 1999 findings

In 1999 the second data collection within the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) was conducted in 30 countries, four years after the first one. A few countries collected data for the first time, although some of them had participated in the planning of the 1995 study, but for different reason were not able to collect data. Participating countries were Bulgaria (new), Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, France (new), FYROM (new), Greece (new), Greenland (new), Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands (new), Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania (new), Russia (Moscow only, new), Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine, and United Kingdom. The project was co-ordinated by The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs, CAN, and was partly supported by the Pompidou Group at the Council of Europe and the Swedish Ministry for Social Affairs.

As in the 1995 study, the surveys were conducted with a standardised methodology and a common questionnaire to provide as comparable data as possible. With very few exceptions data were collected during springtime in 1999, and the target population was students born in 1983, i.e. they were 15–16 year old by the time of the data collection. Data were collected by group-administrated questionnaires in schools on nationally representative samples of classes. The only exception was Russia, which was represented by the capital city Moscow.

Teachers or research assistants collected the data. The students answered the questionnaires anonymously in the classroom under conditions similar to a written test situation. The sample sizes in participating countries vary between 421 and 6,421. Small sample sizes are only found in small countries where no sampling is done. In all remaining countries the sample size was close to or above the recommended number 2,400.

For each country the results of the survey were reported in a standardised format (Country report), which form the basis of the presentations in this report. The main results are summarised in table 2.

Data quality

Every effort was made to standardise the methodology. Even if this to a large extent was obtained, it is obvious that an extensive study with data collection in 30 countries calls for a rather detailed methodological discussion about representativeness as well

as reliability and validity.

Considering the fact that the ESPAD project included such a large number of countries, some of which made a school survey for the first time, the overall impression is that the sampling and data collection in most countries have been accomplished without any major problems. However, some countries in which data might not be entirely comparable ought to be mentioned.

Due to lack of information about the Polish data collection and due to the fact that the Romanian results by mistake also include data from students not born in 1983, data from these countries should normally have been reported separately in the results tables. However, this information came to the knowledge of the authors in such a late stage of the writing of the report that necessary changes were not possible to do. These circumstances around the Polish and Romanian results should be kept in mind when reading this report and looking at the results tables.

However, please observe that Romanian data in table 2 in this section are recalculated and only regard students born in 1983. When the Romanian data in table 2 were corrected it was obvious that the results were almost identical with the first reported results. For most variables there were no changes and when they occurred, the change was only one percentage point. This indicates that the Romanian figures in the results tables most probably will be altered by one or two percentage points, if any.

Since it was not possible to draw the Dutch sample according to the ESPAD guidelines and since it was only possible to ask about half of the ESPAD questions, data from the Netherlands are presented separately in the results tables.

A large number of Danish schools and classes refused to participate in the ESPAD study, which calls for some carefulness when interpreting the Danish data. Extra caution is also recommended regarding some data in certain countries commented on in the chapter "Methodological considerations" However, this extra caution is usually limited to some few variables only.

The validity is assumed to be high in most ESPAD countries. The cultural context in which the students have answered the questions has most probably differed between countries. However, this does not automatically indicate large differences in the willingness to give honest answers.

It seems likely to assume that the validity problems mainly are concentrated to a limited number of countries and that differences in the cultural context do not influence the results to such a degree that large differences between countries should not be regarded as valid. Thus, the magnitude of the estimates in different ESPAD countries probably reflects country differences pretty well, especially between distinguished groups of countries with different experiences of drug use. However, small differences between countries should be considered carefully. They may not reflect valid differences.

Single figures are often difficult to interpret. It is more important to concentrate on the magnitudes of the estimates than on single figures, both when analysing data in single countries and when interpreting differences between countries.

It is important to observe that a difference between 1995 and 1999 that is significant in one country may not be so in another. Differences have to be tested separately in each country to make it possible to decide whether a difference is significant or not. However, to be able to do so it is necessary to use a statistical programme that accounts for cluster effects.

Tobacco

In table 2 the use of cigarettes 40 times or more in lifetime and the 30 days prevalence rates are presented. More than half of the students aged 15–16 in all ESPAD countries have smoked cigarettes at least once in lifetime. The top countries of smoking 40 times or more include Greenland, Faroe Islands and Russia, where nearly half of the students reported this. Much lower figures were reported from Cyprus, Portugal and Romania (about 15%).

In almost half of the countries about 40% or over, reported smoking during the last 30 days. The top countries are Greenland and Bulgaria where 67 and 50% respectively had been smoking during the last month. Overall, there were more students reporting recent smoking experience than smoking 40 times or more in their lifetime. This indicates that many have tested recently without being regular smokers.

The gender distribution for smoking cigarettes is rather equal in many countries. The largest gender differences are to be found in countries where boys are in the majority, e.g. Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Ukraine. Countries where the girls are in clear majority include Denmark, France, Greenland, Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

Alcohol

In table 2 the lifetime prevalence of alcohol consumption 40 times or more is presented. The table also contains the 30 days prevalence of alcohol consumption 10 times or more, and the 30 days prevalence of consuming beer, wine and spirits 3 times or more.

In nearly all countries less than half of the students have consumed alcohol on 40 or more occasions in their lives. The only country that shows a figure above 50% in this respect is Denmark (59%). Countries where 40% or more reported this include Ireland, Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland and the United Kingdom. The smallest figures are reported from FYROM, Greenland, Hungary and Iceland (less than 15%). In the majority of countries there are more boys than girls reporting alcohol consumption at least 40 times during their lives.

One out of five students in Malta and Denmark had been drinking alcohol at least 10 times during the last 30 days, which indicates a rather frequent drinking behaviour. Somewhat lower figures (13–16%) were found in the Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Very few students (3% or less) reported this in Finland, FYROM, Greenland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden, i.e. mainly Nordic countries. There is a clear majority of boys reporting this behaviour.

The largest proportions of students (40% or over), who had been drinking beer 3 times or more during the last 30 days, were reported from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greenland, and Russia. There was a rather wide variety across the countries and the proportions ranged from 53% in Denmark to 12% in Hungary. Overall, more boys than girls had been drinking beer this often during the past month. The only country with a very small gender gap was Greenland, where 43% of the girls and 46% of the boys had indicated beer consumption at least 3 times during the last 30 days.

Wine consumption is less common than beer consumption among the ESPAD students. The highest figure for wine is to be found in Malta where about one third of the students had consumed wine 3 times or more often during the last 30 days. It is predominantly in countries associated with a wine drinking culture that the largest proportions are observed: the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Slovak Republic and Slovenia (17–22%). The group with the lowest figures (4–6%) include almost entirely Nordic countries such as Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland and Norway, but also Portugal. Boys are in majority in about half of the countries,

while rather equal proportions are to be found in many others. Female students are in majority in this respect only in the United Kingdom.

Malta and Denmark show the highest figures (40% or over), related to the consumption of spirits 3 times or more during the last 30 days. Lower, but still over 30% are the proportions reported from Ireland and the United Kingdom. Much lower figures, less than 10%, were reported from Estonia, Finland, Poland and Romania.

In many countries the majority of boys reported a spirits consumption frequency of 3 times or more during the last 30 days, while in many others there are hardly any gender differences. Only in three countries girls' proportions were larger than the one for boys. These countries are Ireland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

Drunkeness

In table 2 the lifetime prevalence of having been drunk 20 times or more and the 30 days prevalence of having been drunk 3 times or more are presented. Among the ESPAD students it is not uncommon to drink to the point of intoxication, but the proportions vary considerably across the countries.

The largest proportion of students who had been drunk 20 times or more was found in Denmark where 41% reported this. In Finland, Ireland and the United Kingdom about one out of four students gave this answer. Much less common was this behaviour in Cyprus, Italy and Romania, where only 2% had indicated this. Boys are in clear majority in many countries, but in some Nordic countries like Denmark, Finland, Greenland, Iceland and Norway there are very small or hardly any gender differences.

Having been intoxicated 3 times or more during the last 30 days indicates a rather high and frequent alcohol intake. The top country in this respect was Denmark, followed by Finland, Greenland, Ireland and the United Kingdom, where this was reported by about one fifth of the students. In contrast, about 3% reported this frequent intoxication in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Romania. Overall, there were more boys than girls reporting this behaviour, but in Finland, Malta, Norway, Iceland, Russia and the United Kingdom there were hardly any gender differences.

Binge drinking

Another measure related to alcohol intoxication is the frequency of having 5 or more drinks in a row

(binge drinking). The proportion indicating such consumption 3 times or more during the last 30 days vary considerably over the ESPAD countries. In a small group of countries nearly one third of the students reported this, including Denmark, Ireland, Poland and the United Kingdom. Less than 10% had done so in FYROM, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovak Republic and Romania. Overall, more boys than girls report this behaviour. Exceptions are Ireland and Norway, where there are no or hardly any gender differences.

Illicit drugs

The lifetime use of various illicit drugs is summarised in table 2, as well as the 30 days prevalence of cannabis use, lifetime use of tranquillisers or sedatives without a doctor's prescription and inhalants.

The most commonly used illicit drug is cannabis (marijuana or hashish). There are a wide variety of proportions across the countries, however, ranging from 1–2% in Cyprus and Romania to about 35% in the Czech Republic, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom. The gender distribution reveals that boys are in the majority in almost all countries, with the exception of Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Malta and Romania, where the proportions are equal or almost equal between boys and girls.

In some countries, the use of cannabis is rather frequent. The proportion of students who report having used marijuana or hashish during the last 30 days was highest in France where 22% had done so. Somewhat lower proportions (13–16%) were reported in the Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. Small proportions (1–2%) were to be found in Cyprus, Faroe Islands, Finland, Romania and Sweden. In the vast majority of countries there are more boys than girls who have used cannabis during the last 30 days.

Other illicit drugs are used much less than cannabis. In the large majority of ESPAD countries 0–2% report that they have tried amphetamines, LSD or ecstasy.

The largest proportion of student who have used amphetamines are to be found in Estonia, Poland and the United Kingdom, in which countries about 7% had reported such experience.

The largest proportions of students (4–5%) reporting use of LSD are to be found in the Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland, Russia and the United Kingdom. In other countries the use of LSD is a marginal behaviour.

The countries with the highest figures (4–6%)

on ecstasy use are somewhat other than for LSD. They include the Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia.

In some ESPAD countries the use of tranquillisers or sedatives without a doctor's prescription is rather common. The largest proportions (18%) are to be found in the Czech Republic and Poland. About one student out of ten had used such substances in France, Hungary, Iceland and Lithuania. This behaviour was least common (2–3%) in Esto-

nia, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Latvia and Ukraine.

Lifetime use of inhalants was highest in Greenland and Ireland (about 20%). Other countries with somewhat large proportions (10–16%) include Croatia, France, Greece, Iceland, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. Small proportions (1–3%) were reported in Bulgaria, Portugal and Romania. The gender differences are small in the majority of the countries.

Table N:1. Selected variables on tobacco, alcohol and drug. Boys.

Country	Cigarette smoking		Alcohol consumption					Drunkenness		Binge drinking ^{a)} last 30 days 3 times or more	Cannabis		Lifetime use of other illicit drugs			Lifetime use of tranquilisers or sedatives ^{b)}	Lifetime use of inhalants
	Lifetime use 40 times or more	Smoked during the last 30 days	Lifetime use 40 times or more	Last 30 days			Lifetime 20 times or more	Last 30 days 3 times or more	Lifetime		Last 30 days	Amphetamines	LSD	Ecstasy			
				Any alcohol 10 times or more	Beer 3 times or more	Wine 3 times or more									Spirits 3 times or more		
Bulgaria	35	48	21	6	38	16	23	11	12	15	14	5	2	1	2	3	4
Croatia	31	40	24	9	31	17	15	11	9	15	18	7	2	3	4	6	15
Cyprus	26	25	32	14	41	12	29	3	5	18	5	2	2	2	2	6	..
Czech Republic	39	46	51	21	59	18	31	23	18	25	40	20	5	7	4	14	8
Denmark	31	34	66	23	64	11	41	37	36	37	30	11	6	1	4	5	7
Estonia	38	41	27	5	38	14	11	19	12	18	18	7	8	3	4	2	8
Faroe Islands	47	42	29	3	33	7	27	26	13	21	8	2	1	0	1	5	7
Finland	41	44	21	2	22	5	10	29	19	21	10	3	1	1	1	3	5
France	..	41	28	12	32	15	26	7	7	16	38	25	3	2	4	10	12
FYROM	22	38	14	6	25	16	18	7	9	14	10	4	0	1	1	4	5
Greece	28	34	54	19	48	23	35	6	4	13	11	7	2	3	4	5	18
Greenland	41	62	13	4	46	5	21	21	25	25	23	12	2	0	0	3	21
Hungary	31	37	17	6	18	16	18	11	9	18	16	5	3	4	4	7	6
Iceland	24	26	15	1	20	5	14	21	12	18	18	5	4	1	1	10	13
Ireland	31	32	41	18	42	7	26	28	27	32	35	18	4	7	6	5	22
Italy	22	37	23	12	45	29	21	4	5	..	28	17	3	2	3	5	7
Latvia	38	48	24	4	41	12	16	15	12	19	22	8	5	4	8	3	7
Lithuania	46	49	29	9	36	15	14	20	12	12	17	6	2	2	6	8	13
Malta	20	29	44	25	45	42	43	5	6	25	7	3	2	1	3	5	15
Norway	31	36	18	3	20	7	20	18	14	26	14	5	3	2	3	4	6
Poland	32	39	35	12	39	12	13	16	14	41	19	10	8	5	3	13	10
Portugal	18	31	21	9	28	6	24	5	6	10	12	7	5	1	3	6	4
Romania ^{c)}	24	31	27	7	29	20	7	5	5	9	2	1	0	0	0	4	2
Russia (Moscow)	46	48	34	11	48	8	14	12	7	20	25	5	1	3	3	4	11
Slovak Republic	35	40	31	9	31	20	22	12	10	12	24	8	1	4	2	5	8
Slovenia	25	28	29	10	36	26	20	15	13	29	27	14	1	3	4	7	15
Sweden	26	29	23	2	28	8	22	23	15	22	11	3	2	2	2	5	9
Ukraine	39	50	18	5	29	15	18	16	14	12	26	7	2	3	3	3	9
United Kingdom	24	31	51	17	47	12	26	33	23	33	39	18	8	5	3	6	14
The Netherlands	30	33	46	24	..	..	..	..	..	..	32	18	3	..	5	..	17

a) Binge drinking: 5 drinks or more in a row.

b) Without a doctor's prescription.

c) In contrast to the results tables, this table includes recalculated Romanian data on students born in 1983.

Table N:2. Selected variables on tobacco, alcohol and drug. Girls.

Country	Cigarette smoking		Alcohol consumption					Drunkenness		Binge drinking ^{a)} last 30 days 3 times or more	Cannabis		Lifetime use of other illicit drugs			Lifetime use of tranquilisers or sedatives ^{b)}	Lifetime use of inhalants
	Lifetime use 40 times or more	Smoked during the last 30 days	Lifetime use 40 times or more	Last 30 days			Lifetime 20 times or more	Last 30 days 3 times or more	Lifetime		Last 30 days	Amphetamines	LSD	Ecstasy			
				Any alcohol 10 times or more	Beer 3 times or more	Wine 3 times or more									Spirits 3 times or more		
Bulgaria	38	51	12	4	19	11	21	4	4	6	11	3	1	1	1	4	2
Croatia	25	36	10	3	11	8	12	3	3	7	13	5	1	1	2	9	12
Cyprus	8	9	12	4	18	5	17	0	1	6	1	0	0	0	0	5	..
Czech Republic	34	43	32	8	25	21	27	8	9	11	30	13	6	5	3	21	6
Denmark	32	41	53	13	42	14	39	34	26	22	20	6	3	1	2	5	8
Estonia	18	24	17	3	14	14	6	6	6	12	8	3	6	1	3	1	6
Faroe Islands	40	41	17	2	19	3	20	12	6	8	6	0	0	1	0	2	3
Finland	38	43	19	1	11	6	8	27	17	15	9	2	1	1	1	9	6
France	..	47	13	5	16	8	19	2	4	7	32	19	2	1	2	14	9
FYROM	18	35	5	1	6	7	11	2	2	4	6	2	1	0	1	9	4
Greece	27	36	33	11	25	11	25	3	3	5	7	2	1	1	1	5	12
Greenland	55	71	15	3	43	5	22	22	17	22	23	8	0	0	0	2	17
Hungary	25	35	9	2	5	8	17	2	3	8	7	2	2	3	3	13	3
Iceland	26	30	14	1	16	3	13	19	12	15	13	3	3	1	1	10	8
Ireland	36	42	39	16	29	8	42	18	23	32	29	11	2	4	4	4	21
Italy	28	43	13	4	22	13	14	2	2	9	23	12	2	2	1	8	5
Latvia	23	34	17	2	18	15	12	6	4	5	12	3	3	3	5	4	4
Lithuania	23	30	17	6	19	15	6	6	6	18	6	2	1	1	2	17	6
Malta	21	34	29	16	20	33	45	2	4	23	7	2	1	1	2	5	17
Norway	34	44	13	1	15	8	18	16	13	23	10	3	2	1	2	3	5
Poland	20	28	18	5	19	4	4	6	6	23	10	4	5	2	2	24	7
Portugal	15	30	10	4	12	3	16	2	2	4	7	3	2	1	2	9	3
Romania ^{c)}	10	20	12	2	13	10	5	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	7	1
Russia (Moscow)	38	42	26	5	31	11	12	9	7	12	20	5	1	4	2	9	8
Slovak Republic	26	34	23	5	11	19	16	8	6	7	15	5	1	2	1	9	6
Slovenia	26	30	16	5	14	21	24	8	9	19	23	11	1	2	4	9	13
Sweden	25	32	15	1	15	8	18	16	11	13	6	1	1	1	1	6	8
Ukraine	18	29	18	4	16	16	14	10	10	8	13	3	0	3	1	2	7
United Kingdom	28	37	43	13	26	21	40	27	25	27	32	15	7	3	3	3	17
The Netherlands	29	26	28	16	..	..	..	5	7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

a) Binge drinking: 5 drinks or more in a row.

b) Without a doctor's prescription.

c) In contrast to the results tables, this table includes recalculated Romanian data on students born in 1983.

Table N:3. Selected variables on tobacco, alcohol and drug. All students.

Country	Cigarette smoking		Alcohol consumption					Drunkenness		Binge drinking ^{a)} last 30 days 3 times or more	Cannabis		Lifetime use of other illicit drugs			Lifetime use of tranquilisers or sedatives ^{b)}	Lifetime use of inhalants
	Lifetime use 40 times or more	Smoked during the last 30 days	Lifetime use 40 times or more	Last 30 days			Lifetime 20 times or more	Last 30 days 3 times or more	Lifetime		Last 30 days	Amphetamines	LSD	Ecstasy			
				Any alcohol 10 times or more	Beer 3 times or more	Wine 3 times or more									Spirits 3 times or more		
Bulgaria	36	50	16	5	27	14	22	8	8	11	12	4	1	1	1	4	3
Croatia	28	38	18	6	23	14	15	7	7	12	16	6	2	2	3	8	13
Cyprus	16	16	21	8	27	8	24	2	3	12	2	1	1	1	1	6	..
Czech Republic	36	44	41	14	40	18	28	16	13	17	35	16	5	5	4	18	7
Denmark	32	38	59	18	53	13	40	41	30	30	24	8	4	1	3	5	7
Estonia	27	32	21	4	25	13	8	12	8	14	13	5	7	2	3	2	7
Faroe Islands	43	41	23	4	25	5	23	19	9	15	7	1	1	1	1	3	5
Finland	39	43	20	1	17	5	9	28	18	18	10	2	1	1	1	6	5
France	..	44	20	8	25	12	23	4	6	12	35	22	2	1	3	12	11
FYROM	20	37	9	3	16	12	14	5	5	9	8	3	0	1	1	7	4
Greece	27	35	42	13	35	17	29	4	3	9	9	4	1	2	2	5	14
Greenland	50	67	14	3	45	5	21	22	19	25	23	10	1	0	0	3	19
Hungary	28	36	13	5	12	13	19	7	7	12	11	4	2	3	3	10	4
Iceland	25	28	14	1	17	4	13	20	12	17	15	4	4	1	1	10	11
Ireland	34	37	40	16	35	8	34	25	24	31	32	15	3	5	5	5	22
Italy	25	40	17	7	31	19	15	2	3		25	14	2	2	2	7	6
Latvia	30	40	20	2	30	13	12	10	7	14	17	5	4	3	6	3	6
Lithuania	35	40	23	8	28	15	10	13	9	9	12	4	2	1	4	12	10
Malta	20	32	36	20	31	37	44	4	5	22	7	3	1	1	2	5	16
Norway	33	40	16	3	17	6	20	16	14	24	12	4	3	2	3	4	6
Poland	26	33	26	8	28	8	9	11	10	31	14	7	7	4	3	18	9
Portugal	17	31	15	6	18	4	20	4	4	6	8	5	3	1	2	8	3
Romania ^{c)}	16	24	18	4	20	14	6	2	3	5	1	0	0	0	0	5	1
Russia (Moscow)	42	45	30	8	40	10	14	10	8	16	22	5	1	4	2	6	9
Slovak Republic	30	37	27	7	21	20	20	10	9	8	19	6	1	3	2	7	7
Slovenia	26	29	23	8	27	22	22	13	11	25	25	13	1	2	4	8	14
Sweden	25	30	19	2	21	8	20	19	14	17	8	2	1	1	1	6	8
Ukraine	29	40	18	5	22	16	17	13	11	10	20	5	1	2	2	3	8
United Kingdom	26	34	47	16	37	16	32	29	24	30	35	16	8	5	3	4	15
The Netherlands	30	36	37	20	..	..	..	8	11	..	28	14	2	..	4	..	..

a) Binge drinking: 5 drinks or more in a row.

b) Without a doctor's prescription.

c) In contrast to the results tables, this table includes recalculated Romanian data on students born in 1983.