

# КУРІННЯ, ВЖИВАННЯ АЛКОГОЛЮ ТА НАРКОТИЧНИХ РЕЧОВИН СЕРЕД ПІДЛІТКІВ, ЯКІ НАВЧАЮТЬСЯ: ПОШИРЕННЯ Й ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ В УКРАЇНІ

ЗА РЕЗУЛЬТАТАМИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ 2019 РОКУ В РАМКАХ МІЖНАРОДНОГО ПРОЕКТУ

## ESPAD – 2019:

The European School Survey  
Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs

«Європейське опитування учнів щодо вживання  
алкоголю та інших наркотичних речовин»



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за результатами дослідження 2019 року в рамках міжнародного проекту

**«Європейське опитування учнів щодо вживання алкоголю  
та інших наркотичних речовин – ESPAD»**

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Монографія має за мету ознайомити громадськість з результатами опитування серед учнівської молоді  
в Україні, проведеного у 2019 році в межах проекту ESPAD – Європейське опитування учнів щодо вживання  
алкоголю та інших наркотичних речовин (European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs). Вона  
містить інформацію про рівень та структуру куріння, вживання алкоголю та наркотиків, оцінку респондентами  
власного оточення, доступ до медико-соціальних послуг для молоді, а також динаміку окремих показників за  
період 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 та 2019 років.

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## Executive summary

The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) is a pan-European research project that aims to describe and understand substance use among teenagers across the continent. Beginning in 1995, ESPAD has been implemented every four years in countries across Europe, including Ukraine. This report presents findings from the 2019 ESPAD survey—the seventh round in Ukraine—and highlights trends in tobacco, alcohol and drug use among teens in the country since 1995.

Implementation of the 2019 ESPAD study in Ukraine was made possible by technical support from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Office in Ukraine and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Implementation was also supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine and the Office of the Presidential Commissioner in Children Rights of Ukraine, State Organization “The Institute for Economics and Forecasting of the NAS of Ukraine”, NGO “Social Monitoring Centre”.

Ethical approval for the 2019 ESPAD survey was obtained from the commission on professional ethics of the Sociological Association of Ukraine (SAU). The Expert Commission on Psychology and Pedagogy of the Scientific and Methodological Council, within the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, also reviewed and approved ESPAD 2019 for national at the State Scientific Institution “Institute for the Modernization of the Content of Education” (Minutes No. 1 of January 16, 2019).

Each round of the ESPAD focuses on a single birth cohort; participants in the 2019 survey were born in 2003, so that all participants were sixteen years old at the time of survey or would be turning sixteen years old before the end of the calendar year. However, in Ukraine, the target population for the 2019 survey was broadened to include students born in 2001 through 2004 (14-17 years old, inclusive) studying in basic secondary education institutions (grades 9–11), vocational and technical education institutions (1-2 years after basic secondary education) and institutions of professional pre-higher education institutions (1-2 years after basic secondary education). Sampling occurred from 260 educational institutions across the country. In total, 8 690 students participated in the survey (4 108 boys and 4 401 girls) from 24 oblasts of Ukraine and the city of Kyiv.

Student participants completed anonymous, standardized questionnaires in a classroom setting. After completing they survey, questionnaires are placed in an envelope and sealed by the participant. During the survey, classroom leaders/curators were outside the classroom.

Data are analysed by gender, age, type of educational institution and in some cases, by type of settlement. While the majority of data analyses are performed on all students, regardless of age, tables and figures illustrating trends in behavioural practices related to smoking, alcohol and drug use over time are based on the ESPAD target birth cohorts—i.e. 15- and 16-year-old boys and girls born in 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1999 and 2003 in the 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 ESPAD survey rounds, respectively.

Therefore, we draw our readers’ attention to two analyses strategies used to present the results of the most recent wave of the ESPAD survey:

- we present aggregate analysis for all 2019 survey participants to describe and examine the outcomes among 14-17 year old students (i.e. 2001-2004 birth cohorts);
- we present subgroup analysis of change and trends in outcomes since 1995 for participants aged 15-16 years (the 2003 birth cohort in 2019).

## Key results

### Availability and perception of risks of substance use

In total, 43.8% of respondents believe that obtaining cigarettes would be easy for them, with 50.1% of student the highest level of perceived availability of cigarettes observed in adolescents in oblast centres (50.1%).

Alco-pops were reported by the majority of teenagers (60.7%) to be the most accessible; however, nearly one-third of teens reported that it was “easy” or “very easy” to get spirits.

12.3% adolescents indicated that it was “very easy” or “rather, easy” to acquire marijuana or cannabis, 7.1% reported the same for tranquilizers, 5.9% for amphetamines, 5.7% for poppy seeds’ extract and 5.2% for ecstasy. Whereas in previous rounds of the ESPAD survey, boys were more likely to report being able to easily acquire psychoactive substances, this round found that a greater proportion of girls perceived increased accessibility of these substances.

Only 17.1% of participants believe that people who sometimes smoke cigarettes are at high risk of negative health effects, whereas more than half (59.7%) believe that heavy smoking (defined as one or more packs of cigarettes per day) is a health risk. 8.1% students reported that smoking cannabis posed little or no risk to health.

Over one-third (39.2%) of students reported that they felt that consuming 1-2 servings of alcohol nearly every day would cause high risk to one’s health. Over two-thirds (67.6%) of participants felt that drinking 4-5 daily servings of alcohol would put one’s health at high risk.

## Use of tobacco and nicotine products

While there is a continuing downward trend in cigarette smoking reported among students in Ukraine, according to 2019 survey results, it remains widespread. Half (50.5%) of participants reported that they have tried smoking at least once in their lives, and 10.2% of boys tried their first cigarette by the age of 9 years. One-fifth (19.6%) of all students reported smoking daily; this proportion was higher among boys than girls (23% versus 16.5%, respectively). In the last 30 days, 11.7% of students had smoked using e-cigarettes (15.4% among boys and 8.3% among girls). Hookah use was relatively common among all students, but was more frequently reported among girls (33.8%) than boys (30.5%).

## Alcohol use

Most (85.7%) students surveyed had ever drunk alcohol (82.7% among boys and 88.4% among girls), and 46.3% reported that they have “considerable” experience drinking because they had consumed alcohol at least ten times. By the time they were 10 years old, 13.4% of students reported that they had tried alcohol for the first time.

Three-quarters (74.7%) of participants reported consuming alcohol in the past 12-months, with 24.4% having drunk at least 10 times over the same period. Almost half (46.5%) of students have consumed alcohol at least once in the last 30 days, and 22.5% reported drinking more than three times in the last 30 days. Among the proportion of participants who reported drinking at least 10 times in the last 30 days, 11.4% were students of vocational technical educational institutions and 8.0% were students of professional pre-higher educational institutions. More than a quarter of participants (28.3%) reported that they had consumed alcohol in the last week.

Almost half (45.0%) of the students surveyed had experienced alcohol intoxication at least once in their lives – 31.1% during the last year and 12.8% in the last month. When asked about their first experience being drunk or significant intoxication due to alcohol, 21.2% of boys and 20.3% of girls reported that this happened by the time they were 14-years old. Level of intoxication at their last drinking experience was reported as “significant” (5-10 points on a 10-point scale) by 16.0% participants. The proportion of students whose first experience of significant intoxication occurred by the age of 14 years is increasing with each round of the ESPAD survey.

Among participants who had a drink in the past 30 days, the most popular were wine and alco-pops. At the last time they consumed alcohol, girls most often drank wine (37.5%) and champagne (31.7%), while the largest proportion of boys reported drinking beer (28.1%).

When asked about the reasons that they drink, 39.4% of students mentioned mood improvement (36.5% among boys and 42.2% among girls) and 26.8% reported using alcohol to solve internal problems

(23.4% among boys versus 30.1% among girls). A substantial proportion of students also reported that they drank alcohol to “get high” (17.3% total – 16.7% among boys and 17.9% among girls) or to feel accepted by their peers (12.5% total– 13.5% among boys and 11.5% among girls).

## Drug use

Nearly one-fifth (18.0%) of students reported that they had used any drugs at least once in their lives (17.9% among boys versus 18.1% among girls). Marijuana use was reported by 8.7% of all participants, but was more commonly reported by boys (10.7%) than girls (6.8%). Among those who had ever used marijuana, 4.6% tried to use it mixed with tobacco. Very few students (1.8%) reported trying marijuana by the age of 13 years. In total 5.3% of students had used marijuana in the last 12 months, and 2.5% used in the last 30 days (3.5% among boys and 1.5% among girls).

Trends in marijuana use among 15- and 16-year olds have varied over sequential rounds of the ESPAD survey. From 1995 through 2003, reported use increased, but decreased over the next two rounds (2007 and 2011), then increased again in 2015 and has remained stable in 2019 among both boys and girls.

Nearly one-tenth (9.2%) of students reported ever trying inhalants to get high and 2.2% had tried tranquilizers without a prescription, with girls reporting tranquilizer use somewhat more frequently. Use of “new substances” that imitate the effects of drugs was reported among 4.4% of students. In total 4.1% of students had smoked herbal mixtures over the last 12 months with a drug-like effect; 2.2% indicated that they used powder, crystals, or pills (tablets) with a drug-like effect.

The proportion of participants reporting drug use increased with age and was greater in oblast centres. The use of psychoactive substances remains more widespread among students of vocational technical educational institutions.

## Polydrug use

Overall, 4.2% of participants reported of polydrug use (at least 2 substances), and this was more common among boys (6.0%) than girls (2.1%) and among students of vocational technical educational institutions (10.4%). Among those reporting polysubstance use, 1.9% reported cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption, 1.4% reported cigarette smoking and cannabis use, and 1.3% reported cannabis and other drugs use.

Nearly two-thirds (62.4%) of students who consumed two or more substances attended cafes, discos and parties at least once a week, and 14% reported that they had been gambling at least 2-3 times per week for the past 12 months. The proportion of students who reported experiencing bullying was over two-times as great among those who also reported polysubstance use versus those who did not (21.2% versus 9.5%, respectively). Students who identified as aggressors of bullying were also more likely to report polysubstance use compared to participants who did not identify as aggressors (17.4% versus 4.7%, respectively).

## Problematic use of social media, computers and gambling

Nearly half (44.7%) of students spend at least 4 hours on social media on weekdays (Monday through Friday). However, the most commonly reported time to actively use social media was during the weekends, and girls reported more social media activity than boys. More than half (55.4%) of participants reported that they spend too much time on social networks – 23.9% reported that their mood worsened if they were not able to spend time on social media, and another 43.6% reported that their parents had told them that they spent too much time on social media.

Playing electronic devices for at least 6 hours per day was reported by 9.4% of students, but was more common among boys than girls (14.2% versus 4.9%, respectively). Over one-quarter (27.5%) of students reported that they spend too much time playing computer games, and 13.9% admitted that their mood worsened if they are unable to play games on a computer, tablet, smartphone or similar. One in four (25.7%) participants reported that their parents have told them that they spend too much time playing computer games.

A small proportion (6.2%) of students reported that they had gambled for over 2 hours at a time during the last 12 months, but this behaviour was more commonly reported among boys (10.5%) than girls (2.3%). Among participants who gambled, 6.7% were addicted to gambling (10.8% among boys and 2.9% among girls) and gambling addiction was problematic for 1.5% of them (2.6% for boys and 0.5% for girls). Approximately one-tenth (9.6%) of students who gambled reported participating in online gambling in the last 12 months.

### Social environment as a factor influencing young people's behavioural practices

The majority of student participants reported that they have and regularly see both of their parents – only 7.4% do not have or see their fathers and 0.7% do not have or see their mothers. Participants reported living with: their mother (83.2%), father (63.1%), brothers (31.5%), sisters (28.6%), grandparents (22.7%), but 2.0% live independently, 8.7% – with stepfathers, 1.1% – with stepmothers, 3.3% – with other relatives and 0.6% not with relatives (in boarding school, etc.). The highest levels of education obtained by their father and mother were unknown for 15.9% and 13.2% of participants, respectively.

For the most part, students reported that their parents are not overly concerned with how they spend their time while at home and while outside of their home. The most common responses were that their parents “almost never”, “rarely”, “occasionally” controlled how they spent their time. Girls and younger participants were more likely to report that parents controlled how they spend their time. The majority of students regardless of age admitted that their parents know where and with whom they spend their time in the evenings. Girls were more likely than boys to say that their parents “almost always” and “often know” where and with whom they spend time in the evenings.

Regardless of age, more than half of participants reported that they can “almost always” or “often” borrow money from their parents; this was reported among a slightly greater proportion of girls than boys. While 28.2% reported that they can “rarely” or “almost never” borrow money from their parents, 18.0% said that they simply get money from their parents – and this was more commonly reported among boys.

Students studying in secondary educational institutions, and those that live in rural areas, were more likely to report that their parents have control over how and with whom they spend their time in the evening. In total, 88.6% of students reported that their parents were aware of how they spent their time over the weekends, and 62.6% reported that their parents were “always aware”. It is alarming that every tenth participant, regardless of age and gender, said that their parents “almost never” or “rarely” know where and with whom they spend their evenings outside the home 8.8% of participants reported that their parents are only sometimes informed about how they spend time on Saturdays, and 2.6% said that their parents are usually completely unaware.

Regardless of age, participants rated the level of support they receive from their family from 5.13-6.11 points on a 7-point scale, with the highest rating indicating that “my family is really trying to help me”. Compared to support from their families, students rated support among friends lower, ranging from 4.94 to 5.24 points, where the highest score is associated with the statement, “With my friends, I can share my joys and sorrows”.

According to the study, students most commonly discuss the conflict in Eastern Ukraine with their parents or family members (37%), peers (26.3%), teachers (21.9%), or on social media (17.7%). Most participants, regardless of gender and age, reported that they are simply recipients of the news about the conflict, rather than active participants in further discussions. The main news sources from which participants receive information about the conflict include television (42.0%), social media (40.5%), and the Internet or print media (39.1%).

A small but substantial proportion (13.5%) of educational institutions does not have a psychologist on staff. The leaders of half of participating educational institutions reported that they needed additional training for their staff on mediation, conflict resolution, prevention of bullying, Internet addiction and safe behaviour on the Internet, sexual education.

## Bullying among adolescents

One-tenth (10.2%) of students reported being a victim of bullying in the last 2-3 months and 5.7% of all participants admitted to participating in bullying other people, with boys more commonly reporting this behaviour than girls (6.9% versus 4.7%, respectively). Among students who had experienced bullying, 37.5% reported that they ignored it, and 28.9% reported that they had to fight back themselves, both physically and verbally. Among students who reported ignoring bullying that was targeted at them, 30.1% said that it was not a problem for them to do so, 29.3% felt that anything they did in response would have any effect, and 11.6% were afraid that responding to the event may perpetuate the bullying. Almost one-fifth (18.7%) of participants who were victims of bullying had sought support from their parents and 13.5% sought support from friends. One-in-four (25.8%) students said that they had observed bullying but were not personally involved in the incident(s). Among those who witnessed bullying, 35.5% involved themselves (either physically or verbally) in the incident, and 29.0% ignored it.

Teachers also reported experiences of bullying – either by students (26.6%) or parents of students (26.3%). Teacher bullying was mainly experienced in the form of verbal abuse in front of others; this behaviour was reported by 30.1% of managers of the educational institutions.

## Experience in seeking medical and social services

Two-thirds (66.5%) of all students surveyed reported choosing a family doctor and signing a declaration with them, either on the own or with the help of parents. During the last 12-months, 66.8% of the participants had visited their doctor, and 58.6% underwent a comprehensive medical examination, and 15.2% of students reported that they had approached a psychologist at their school. Most (83.8%) educational institutions had a nurse on staff, but only 13.8% had a doctor available on site.

Relatively few participants (26.5%) believed that medical staff would keep information about their appointment confidential, while 32.1% believed that social pedagogues or psychologists at their schools would maintain confidentiality around their visits.

HIV knowledge (calculated as a National Indicators' knowledge score "The percentage of young people aged 15–24 who correctly identify ways to prevent and transmit HIV infection") among adolescents was relatively low –15.6%, for both boys and girls. Over two-thirds (68.9%) knew that a person living with HIV could look healthy. Every fifth (19.5%) adolescent incorrectly believed that HIV can be transmitted through mosquito bites. On the same range (21.2%) reported that they could protect themselves against HIV if vaccinated. Less than half (45.9%) of students believed that the risk of HIV is diminished by having sex with only one HIV-negative partner and 60.1% of respondents correctly responded that they could prevent HIV infection by using a condom during each sexual encounter.

Almost two-thirds (63.0%) adolescents said they knew where to go if they wanted HIV testing, but this knowledge was slightly higher among girls (66.8%) than boys (58.9%).

## Recommendations

One important aspect of developing healthy lifestyles in adolescents is the ensuring that they are aware of the value of their own health. This awareness can be fostered through close collaboration of adolescents with their parents, teachers and other educational institutions, social workers, psychologists, and medical professionals.

Given the successful implementation of the Health Fundamentals course, it is necessary to continue to systematically work with adolescents in order for them to take responsibility for their own health and lifestyles, tailoring these activities to accommodate age and gender. A key component of this work will be to further support programs designed to train educators and other staff in educational institutions on developing interactive, innovative methods and approaches to preventing problematic substance use among adolescents.

We strongly recommend expanding support to the development of social programs initiated by young people that aim to reduce alcohol and drug use among adolescents, and advocate for more work on shaping the social policies of individual joint territorial communities, settlements, districts, etc.

In order to reduce the accessibility of alcohol and tobacco among adolescents, it is necessary to increase regulations around their availability. Controlling the number of official points of sale, limiting the number of licenses available to sellers, reducing the number of hours per day and days per week during which alcohol and tobacco can be sold, and/or improving systems of accountability for sellers that are non-compliant with laws and rules around the sale of alcohol and tobacco/nicotine products.

Furthermore, it is important for policymakers to consider the active involvement of young people in the public oversight of regulatory compliance and implementation of programs aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles – including the prohibiting the sale of tobacco and alcohol to minors and regulating smoking and drinking in public places – among themselves and their peers.

Increasingly, the Internet, and digital environments generally, are important targets for enhanced educational platforms addressing potential risks such as: cyberbullying and the unlawful sale of psychoactive substances and child pornography. Rather than banning access to these environments, developing digital literacy strategies for both adolescents and adults with whom adolescents closely interact (e.g. parents and family members, educators, and other staff working within educational institutions and professionals of different profiles) will be crucial in health promotion for adolescents. Specifically, media literacy and media security courses should become part of the standard curriculum within general and specialized secondary educational institutions.

To effectively prevent bullying, teachers must be equipped to respond to these incidents adequately and in timely manner. As such, additional support, resources and training on bullying prevention should be provided to teachers and staff in educational institutions. Potential strategies to work with young people include mass information campaigns and development of social advertising focused on preventing bullying among adolescents.

Finally, it is important for local governments to continue to develop infrastructure including organized clubs, community centres, parks, and sports grounds so that adolescents and their families can meaningfully engage in leisure activities.

At the same time, we recommend substantially increasing social advertising campaigns, through a variety of media platforms used by adolescents that focus on promoting and maintaining health, developing healthy lifestyle habits, promoting physical activity, and improving awareness and accessibility of available medical and social services that may be beneficial for adolescents and young people.



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