



The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (The ESPAD Report 2019)

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) presented the results of the 2019 ESPAD (European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs) Report on 12 November 2020 in Lisbon.

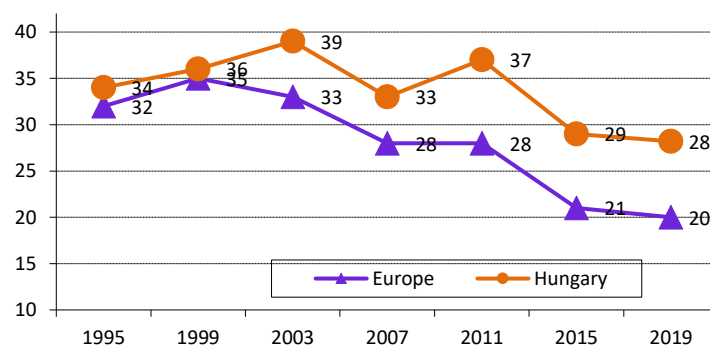
Main results of the survey

Cigarette use

The decrease in cigarette use among European adolescents is a positive change. Between 1995 and 2019, the prevalence rate of those students who had used cigarettes in the last 30 days fell from an average of 33% to 20%, while the rate of daily smokers went down from 20% to 10%. However, **e-cigarette use has skyrocketed.** Particularly interesting is the fact that a significant proportion of e-cigarette users had never used traditional tobacco products before. So we see traditional tobacco users switching to e-cigarettes, but also, a huge number of non-smokers trying out e-cigarettes or using e-cigarettes regularly.

Among Hungarian 16-year-olds, smoking is still much more common than the European average: 28.2% had smoked in the last 30 days, and 17.9% on a daily basis. Similar to European trends, **the proportion of smokers is decreasing in Hungary.** However, this decrease is due to a drop in smoking among boys. Regular smoking is **higher among girls** compared to previous years; **the gender difference has become more significant.** E-cigarette use spreads among Hungarian young people too: 11.7% reported that they had used e-cigarette in their lifetime at least once.

Prevalence rate of smokers among 16-year-old school students in Europe and Hungary in the last 30 days (%)



Alcohol use

Alcohol use is **still very much widespread among 16-year-old European school students.** More than three-quarters of respondents (79%) reported consuming alcohol at least once during their lifetime, and nearly half of those surveyed (43%) reported consuming alcohol 30 days prior to the survey.

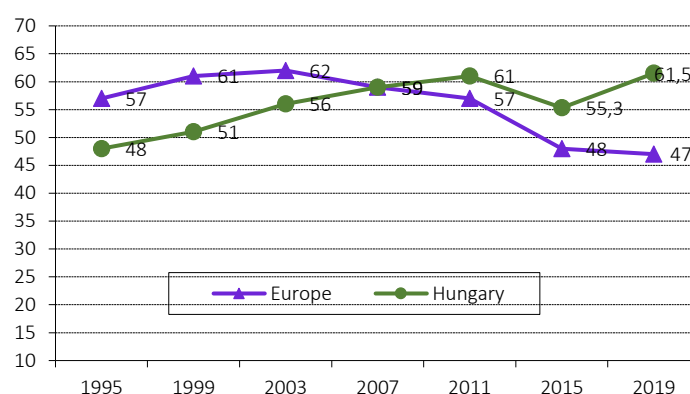
Trends, however, show a steady decline: the prevalence rate of school students consuming alcohol in the last 30 days fell from the record high 91% (2003) to 63%.

Binge drinking, or heavy episodic drinking reached its lowest level in Europe in 2011 (on average 35%). Gender difference has become less significant: in 2019, nearly as many girls (34%) as boys (36%) reported binge drinking in the last 30 days.

In contrast to European trends, in Hungary, main figures of alcohol consumption increased in 2019 compared to 2015. 91% of Hungarian school students reported consuming alcohol at least once during their lifetime and 61.5% of students reported alcohol use during the 30 days prior to survey. **These figures are significantly higher than the European average. The amount of alcohol consumed at one time also increased. Spirits were the most consumed alcoholic beverage** in Hungary in 2019, just like in the previous years.

Compared to the European average, **a higher proportion (41.2%) of Hungarian adolescents reported heavy drinking** during the last 30 days. The trends are different too: between 2015 and 2019 the prevalence rate of students who reported heavy drinking in the last 30 days increased. This is mainly due to the fact that **the prevalence of heavy drinking increased among Hungarian girls.**

Trend in the prevalence rate of alcohol consumers in Europe and Hungary among 16-year-olds in the last 30 days (%)



Other drug use

The prevalence rate of illicit drug users is 17% on average among 16-year-olds in Europe, nonetheless differences between countries are significant (Kosovo lowest: 4.2%, highest in the Czech Republic: 29%). **The prevalence rate of young people reporting lifetime use of illicit drugs has been slightly declining since 2011.**

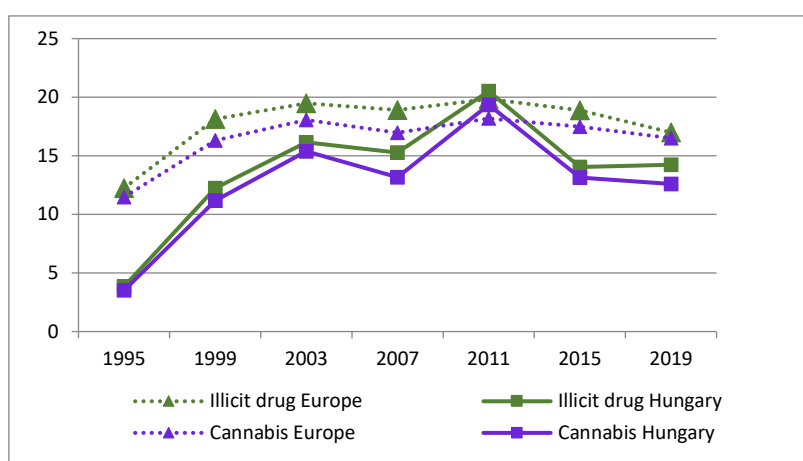
Cannabis remains the most widely used illicit drug, 16% of 16-year-olds had used it at least once in their lifetime. 4% of 16-year-old students are high-risk cannabis users.

6.6% of respondents used tranquillisers or sedatives without a doctor's prescription, and 4% used painkillers in order to get high.

There was a slight **drop** (from 4% to 3.4%; 2019) **in the percentage of school students in Europe who had used legal highs (new psychoactive substances) at least once** in their lifetime. The percentage of adolescents who had consumed amphetamines, ecstasy, cocaine or LSD are lower than this.

Among Hungarian youth, the prevalence rate of those who had ever used any illicit drug was 13.9% in 2019, which is lower than the European average. Illicit drug use reached a record high in Hungary a little later than in other European countries, in 2011 – with data from 2015 showing a significant decline and **data from 2019 showing a minimal decline.** The decline in 2019 occurred among girls, while the prevalence rate among boys increased slightly. In Hungary, too, cannabis is the most widely used drug among high school students. Among Hungarian school students, pharmaceutical use for non-medical purposes is more prevalent than the European average (European average 9.2% Hungary: 11%) and the prevalence rate of adolescents who had used new psychoactive substances at least once is 0.3 percentage points higher.

Lifetime prevalence of illicit drugs and cannabis among 16-year-old students in Europe and Hungary (%)



Gambling, online gaming, social media use

Gambling is popular with school students. **22% of European students had gambled** (mostly lottery) **at least once** in the last 12 months prior to the survey. 7.9% of students were involved in online gambling.

60% of the European school students had been involved in an online game on a typical school day in the last 12 months, and 68% played on the weekends.

The vast majority of the European students (94%) had been using social media platforms in the week prior to the survey. **In 2019, within the last 7 days students had used social media for 2-3 hours on a typical school day and for 6 or more hours on a typical non-school day.**

Hungarian 16-year-olds gamble slightly less than the European average; with regard to the time spent on social media and online games there is no significant difference.

More than one fifth of Hungarian students reported problematic internet use.

Key findings:

- Hungarian adolescents
 - smoke and drink more than their average European counterparts;
 - their illicit drug use is lower than the European average.
- In Europe
 - alcohol use is decreasing;
 - cigarette use is decreasing;

- illicit drug use is slightly declining;
- meanwhile in Hungary
 - alcohol use is increasing;
 - cigarette use is decreasing;
 - and the percentage of illicit drug users does not change.
- Europe and Hungary are facing new challenges, namely
 - problematic cannabis use;
 - the spread of new addictive behaviours, primarily problematic social media use.

About the ESPAD Survey

The ESPAD – European School Survey on Alcohol and Other Drugs – programme was launched in 1995 with the aim of **collecting data on young people's smoking, alcohol and other drug consumption patterns**. Aim is to collect data which are comparable across countries and over time. The survey is repeated every four years. Lately, recent and widespread behaviours such as Internet and social media use, online gaming, and gambling have been added to the survey. In 2019, during the seventh wave of data collection the study was carried out across 35 European countries, and 16-year-olds participated from 100.000 schools.

In Hungary, ESPAD data have been collected at the Department of Sociology and Social Policy, Institute of Communication and Sociology, **Corvinus University of Budapest**. Leader of research: Zsuzsanna Elekes.

More on the international report: <http://www.espad.org/espad-report-2019>

More on the Hungarian report: <http://www.devianciakutatas.hu/espad>