

# Europe's teens smoking, drinking less but drugs still high: study

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Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and causes many diseases. Credit: CDC/Debra Cartagena

Europe's schoolchildren are drinking and smoking less than their predecessors, but illicit drug use remains at "high levels", a new study published Tuesday shows.

"Smoking and drinking among 15- and 16-year-old school students are

showing signs of decline, but there are concerns over challenges posed by [new drugs](#) and new addictive behaviours," according to the study published by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

"Positive developments" were seen across the board in the case of teenage smoking, against a backdrop of anti-smoking measures introduced by governments over the last two decades.

More than half the respondents said they had never smoked, while less than a quarter reported they were current smokers, the sixth European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) showed.

Daily smoking continues to be more prevalent among boys, but the gender gap has narrowed since the first such survey was taken 20 years ago.

While alcohol use among adolescents in Europe dropped, it remains high with 81 percent of the children questioned having drunk alcohol as opposed to 89 percent in 1995, according to the survey of over 96,000 schoolchildren across Europe.

"Heavy episodic drinking (binge drinking) remains a concern," the study found.

Eighteen percent of students reported having used an illicit drug at least once in their life, a level largely unchanged since 2003 according to the study, but levels varied considerably across the countries surveyed.

In the Czech Republic, 37 percent of the students reported having used any illicit drug at least once.

Particularly low levels—10 percent or less—of [illicit drug](#) use were

noted in Albania, Cyprus, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Ukraine, among others.

The most common drug used was cannabis.

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