

PRESS RELEASE

Smoking among Ukrainian teenagers decrease, though alcohol consumption, drug use, and social media addiction are increasing

Kyiv, 10 October 2019: 50% of the Ukrainian teenagers had smoked cigarettes, 86% reported alcohol use and 18% have used illicit drugs—highlights the report presented by the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) **“Tobacco, alcohol and drug use by school-aged students: prevalence and trends in Ukraine.”** The report was developed on the results of the seventh data-collection wave of the survey among teenagers, conducted in the framework of international research project “European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD).”

“The wellbeing of teenagers is essential for our future. The survey results on substance abuse and addictive habits should alarm us about the social environments teenagers are living in. We hope that the ESPAD research and its data on Ukraine will inform public health and educational programs. Drawing insights from these findings, we will keep working with our partners for the future where every child enjoys a good quality life, including access to proper education and healthcare,” admitted Lotta Sylwander, UNICEF Representative in Ukraine.

The research has been conducted in Ukraine every four years, starting from 1995. The continuity of the survey allows tracing the dynamics and key tendencies in substance use and addiction prevalence among adolescents. This year’s results demonstrate a steady overall decrease in smoking among students. In 2003 over 70% of respondents had smoked cigarettes, whilst in 2019 the figure is 50%. At the same time, alcohol became more accessible—more than half of teenagers admitted that alcoholic beverages are easy to obtain beer, wine, and alcoholic beverages. The share of teenagers who have used illicit drugs is 18%, while the number of teenage girls who used drugs increased 1,5 times compared to 2015 (from 12,7% in 2015 to 18,1% in 2019).

Besides substance use, the research also covers social media addictions and the issue of bullying at schools. The data from the 2019 report demonstrate that more than half of the teenage respondents spend over four hours per day on social media activities.

Selected key results

Cigarette use

- Half of the student respondents (50,5%) smoked cigarettes at least once.
- Almost every fifth teenager (19,6%) has a habit of everyday smoking.

Alcohol use

- The vast majority of the students (85,7%) reported alcohol use.
- Every fifth teenager (22,5%) consumes alcohol weekly.

Illicit drug use

- 18% of the students have used any kind of illicit drugs at least once during their lifetime.

- 8,7% of teenagers have tried cannabis, while 9,2% have used inhalants for intoxication effects.
- Polysubstance use (the use of multiple substances) among all the respondents is 4,2%.

Internet and social media use, gaming, and gambling

- 44,7% of teenagers spend more than four hours on social media daily during the weekdays.
- More than half of respondents (55,4%) reported that they spend too much time on social media.
- Nearly every fourth student (23,9%) admitted mood swings when they do not have access to social media.
- 6,7% of adolescents have a gambling addiction.

Bullying

- Every tenth teenager (10,2%) reported being bullied within the past 2-3 months.
- Every fourth student (25,8%) witnessed bullying, but has not participated in it.
- More than one-third of bullying victims (37,5%) have ignored it; 28,9% of respondents have tried to resist (physically or verbally); 18,7% have sought support from parents, and 13,5% have asked their friends for support.
- Among the reasons to ignore bullying the victims listed: downplaying bullying as a problem –30,1%; did not see any effective solution to the problem–29,3%; fear of new bullying episodes – 11,6%.

About ESPAD: The international project the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) has been conducted since 1995 with the support of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). Currently, over 45 European countries participate in the research, including Ukraine. The survey is conducted every four years. In 2019, the seventh data-collection wave in Ukraine covered 8509 respondents (4108 males and 4401 females) who are 14- to 17-year-old students at urban and village schools, vocational schools, and institutions for professional education (vocational colleges).

In Ukraine, the survey was conducted by the Ukrainian Institute for Social Research after Oleksandr Yaremenko NGO with the support from the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

More detail on the project can be found following the link <http://www.espad.org/> (project website) and www.uisr.org.ua/espad (Ukrainian Institute for Social Research after Oleksandr Yaremenko NGO website).

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