

# Youth attitudes on drugs

## Summary

Fieldwork: May 2011

Report: July 2011

This survey was requested by Directorate-General Justice and coordinated by Directorate-General Communication

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/flash\\_arch\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/flash_arch_en.htm)

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

Flash EB Series #330

## Youth attitudes on drugs

Survey conducted by The Gallup Organization,  
Hungary upon the request of Directorate-  
General Justice



Coordinated by Directorate-General  
Communication

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**THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION**

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## Introduction

Drugs and drug-related problems are major concerns for EU citizens and pose a threat to the safety and health of European society and its citizens. The use of drugs, particularly among young people, is at a historically high level. The European Commission has been studying the drug phenomenon in EU Member States for several years. In 2002 and 2004, surveys were conducted among young people in the then 15 EU Member States (Special Eurobarometer N° 172 and Flash Eurobarometer N° 158). In 2008, a survey was conducted among a similar group in the 27 EU Member States (Flash Eurobarometer N° 233).

The current Flash Eurobarometer on “*Youth attitudes on drugs*” (N° 330), requested by Directorate-General Justice, builds on these earlier surveys in order to measure the trend in attitudes of this target group towards drugs. In response to recent developments in the EU drug market, in the current survey, young people were also asked about their experiences with and attitudes towards new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs, so-called new psychoactive substances or “legal highs”.

This survey’s objective was to study young EU citizens’ attitudes to – and perceptions about – drugs and related issues, such as:

- past and potential information sources about illicit drug use and the related risks and effects
- perceptions about the availability of specific drugs and self-reported use of cannabis and new psychoactive substances
- perceived health risks associated with occasional and regular use of various licit and illicit substances (i.e. cocaine, ecstasy, cannabis, alcohol and tobacco)
- attitudes towards banning or regulating illicit drugs, new psychoactive substances, alcohol and tobacco
- opinions about the effectiveness of alternative drug policies.

This survey’s fieldwork was carried out between 9 and 13 May 2011. Over 12,000 randomly selected young people (aged 15-24) were interviewed across the 27 EU Member States (= EU27). The survey was carried out by telephone, with web-based computer assisted telephone interviewing (WebCATI). To correct for sampling disparities, a post-stratification weighting of the results was implemented, based on socio-demographic variables.

It must be stressed that caution should be exercised when interpreting the results of questions on personal use of certain substances and questions about new substances. Despite the EU coverage, the sample sizes in each Member State were relatively small to assess actual consumption, while the perception of substances included in the category “new psychoactive substances” may have varied across countries and age groups.

# 1. Access and use of illicit drugs and substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs

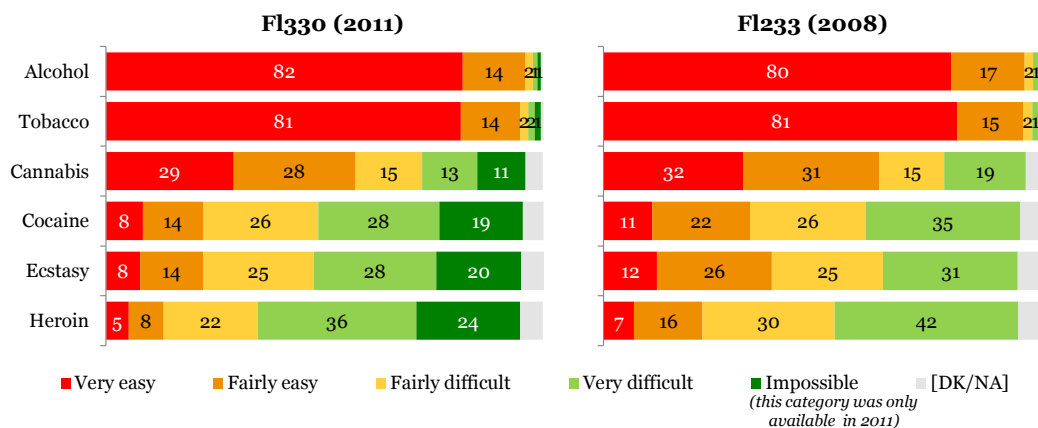
## 1.1 Access to illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco

**Heroin** was the substance considered to be the most difficult to get hold of: 24% said that it would be *impossible* to obtain heroin, 36% thought that it would be *very difficult* and 22% felt it would be *fairly difficult* to get hold of this drug – *if they wanted to within 24 hours*. Slightly less than a tenth (8%) of interviewees thought that obtaining heroine would be *fairly easy* and a few respondents (5%) said it would be *very easy*. **Cocaine** and **ecstasy** were perceived as being somewhat easier to get hold of than heroin.

Young people considered **cannabis** to be the most easily accessible of the illicit substances: 29% thought it would be *very easy* for them to acquire cannabis and a similar number (28%) thought it would be *fairly easy*. About a tenth of respondents (11%) said it would be *impossible* for them to obtain cannabis, 13% considered it *very difficult* to obtain this drug and 15% thought it would be *fairly difficult*.

Having access to **alcohol** and **tobacco** seemed to cause no problems for the group of interviewed young EU citizens: a vast majority thought that it would be *very easy* for them to obtain alcoholic drinks (82%) or tobacco products (81%); only a handful considered it to be *difficult* or *impossible* (for example, 1%-2% said it would be *very difficult* to obtain these substances). This finding is in line with the fact that for many respondents – the older ones – the purchase and consumption of alcohol and tobacco is legal.

**Ease of access to certain substances (if desired), 2008-2011**



Q9 (2011). How difficult or easy do you think it would be for you personally to obtain the following substances within 24 hours if you wanted some?  
 Q6 (2008). How difficult would it be for you to get hold of any of the following substances if you wanted to: very difficult, fairly difficult, fairly easy or very easy?  
 Base: all respondents, % by EU27

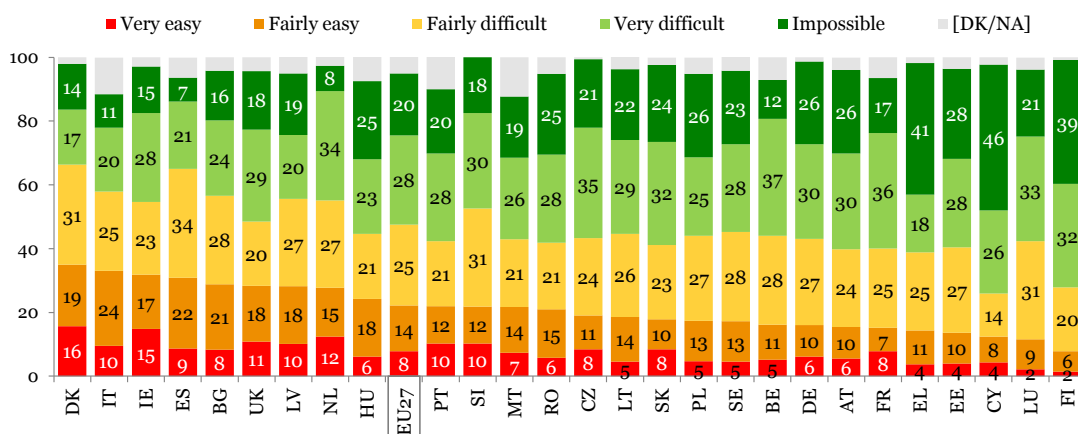
A comparison with the 2008 data appears to show that young people now considered it more difficult to obtain heroin, cocaine and ecstasy. However, it must be noted that in the current survey the reference timeframe for obtaining substances was narrowed down to 24 hours, a modification compared to the question asked in the previous survey in 2008, when no time limit was indicated.

Given that most young people appear to find it *difficult* to obtain heroin, cocaine or ecstasy (this was observed both in 2008 and 2011), the change in question wording – i.e. adding a focus on the possibility to obtain these substances *within 24 hours* – might have caused that, in 2011, more respondents chose the “very difficult” or “impossible” responses. It should also be pointed out that, in 2008, respondents were offered fewer response options (i.e. “impossible” was not included in the response scale). However, given that this response option is closest to the “very difficult” response option, it is unlikely that this change in the current survey will have influenced the proportions of “very easy” and “fairly easy” responses.

For **illicit drugs** – such as **cocaine and ecstasy** – Spanish, Italian and Danish respondents were consistently found at the lower end of the country rankings, with more respondents finding it *very* or *fairly easy* to get hold of these substances. Cypriot, Greek and Finnish interviewees, on the other hand, were more likely to say it would be *impossible* to obtain the aforementioned illicit drugs.

For example, the proportion of young people who thought it would be *fairly* or *very easy* for them to obtain ecstasy varied between roughly a tenth in Finland (8%) and Luxembourg (11%) and three times that figure in Spain (31%), Ireland (32%), Italy (34%) and Denmark (35%). Conversely, the proportion of 15-24 year-olds who said that it would be *very difficult* or *impossible* to get hold of that drug ranged from less than a third in Spain (28%), Italy and Denmark (both 31%) to somewhat more than 7 in 10 respondents in Finland (71%) and Cyprus (72%).

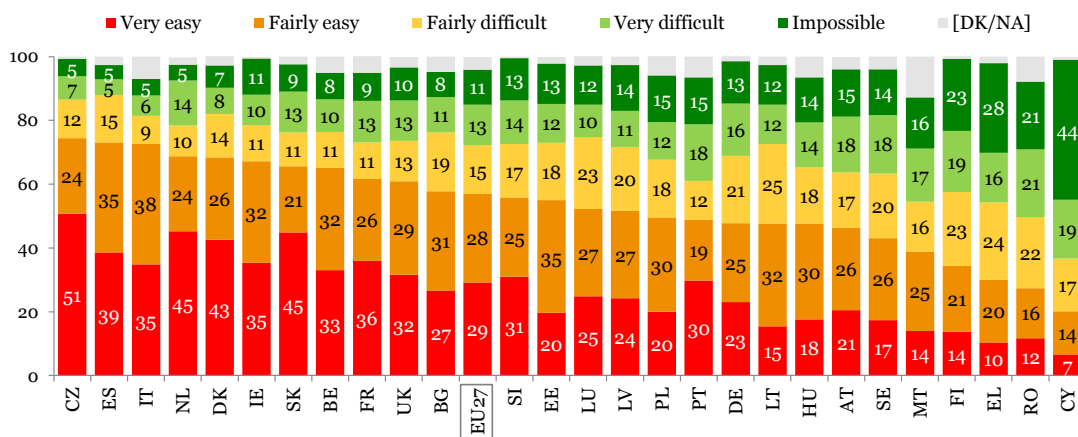
#### Ease of access to **ecstasy** (if desired)



Q9. How difficult or easy do you think it would be for you personally to obtain the following substances within 24 hours if you wanted some?  
Base: all respondents, % by country

Although in almost all EU countries, a majority of young people thought it would be *very difficult* or *impossible* to get hold of heroin, cocaine or ecstasy, in only one country – Cyprus – did more than half of 15-24 year-olds say there would be a problem in acquiring **cannabis** (44% “impossible” and 19% “very difficult” responses). Respondents in the Czech Republic were the ones expecting to find the least amount of difficulty in obtaining cannabis: 51% thought it would be *very easy* and 24% *fairly easy* to obtain this substance, while a minority (12%) said this would be *very difficult* or *impossible*.

#### Ease of access to **cannabis** (if desired)



Q9. How difficult or easy do you think it would be for you personally to obtain the following substances within 24 hours if you wanted some?  
Base: all respondents, % by country

While there were large variations, across EU Member States, in young people’s perceptions about how difficult it would be for them to get hold of illicit drugs, there was **significantly less variation in their assessment of the ease of access to alcohol and tobacco**. In almost all EU Member States, more than 90% of respondents said it would be *fairly* or *very easy* to obtain cigarettes or other tobacco products; a similar picture emerged when looking at the individual country results for alcohol.

Since the **age limit for buying and consuming alcohol** in the EU Member States varied from 14 to 20 years of age and that for buying tobacco products varies from 16 to 18 years of age, differences in the ease of access to these products for 15-18 year-olds might be expected. While 82% of 18 year-olds said it would be *very easy* to obtain cigarettes or other tobacco products, this proportion decreased to 55% for 15 year-olds. Similarly, 84% of 18 year-olds expected it would be *very easy* for them to obtain alcohol, this proportion gradually decreased to 58% for 15 year-olds.

Ease of access to certain types of **illicit drugs** also differed between the youngest respondents and the oldest ones. For example, 31% of 15-18 year-olds thought that it would be *very difficult* and 28% felt it would be *fairly difficult* to get hold of cocaine; the corresponding proportions for 22-24 year-olds were 24% and 23%, respectively.

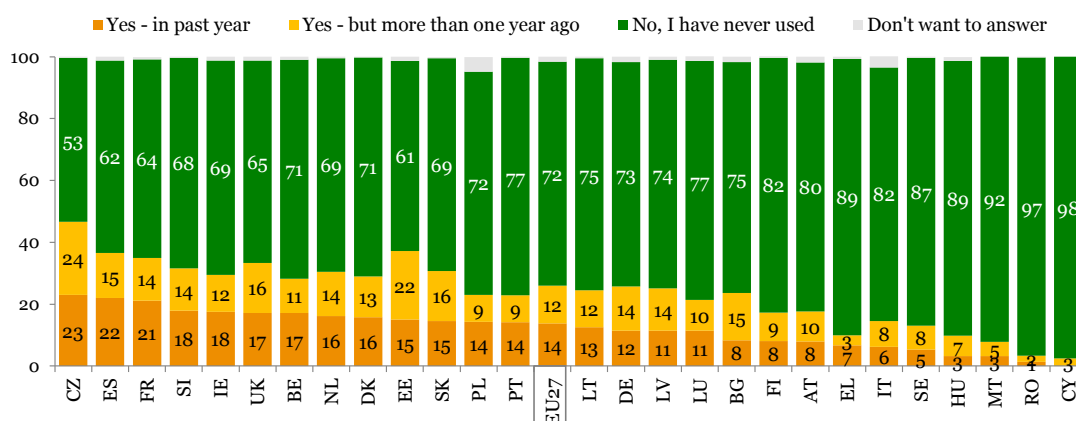
Young people’s place of residence also influenced the possibility of being able to obtain drugs. Those from rural areas more often than city dwellers thought it would be *very difficult* or *impossible* for them to acquire heroin, cocaine, ecstasy or cannabis. For example, 28% of rural residents said it would be *very difficult* or *impossible* to acquire cannabis if they wanted to, compared to 23% of urban residents and 19% of metropolitan residents.

### 1.2 Self-reported use of cannabis

Roughly a quarter of young people participating in the survey said they have used cannabis; more precisely, 6% reported having used cannabis *in the past 30 days*, 8% *in the past year* and 12% had used it, although *not in the past 12 months*.

In the Czech Republic, almost half of respondents said they had used cannabis: almost a quarter (23%) had used it in the past year and a similar proportion (24%) had used cannabis, but not in the past year. France and Spain joined the Czech Republic with somewhat more than a fifth of young people who reported having used cannabis in the past year (21%-22%).

Use of cannabis



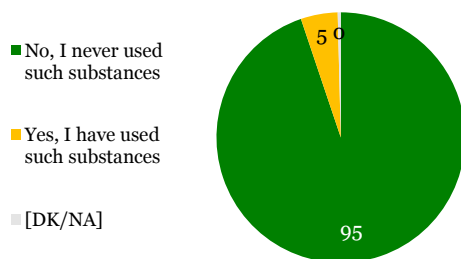
Q10. Have you used cannabis yourself?  
 “in the past year” = “in the past 30 days” + “in the past 12 months”  
 Base: all respondents, % by country

Young men were more likely than young women to have used cannabis: 18% of young men, as opposed to 9% of young women, reported having used cannabis in the past year. Similarly, while 19% of metropolitan residents said they had used cannabis in the past year, this proportion decreased to 11% for rural residents. Older respondents were also somewhat more likely to say they had used cannabis in the past year; nonetheless, the largest differences across age groups were seen when looking at the proportions who said they had used cannabis, but not in the past 12 months

### 1.3 Experience with new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs

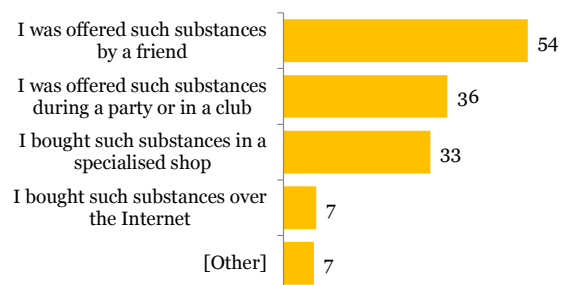
In most EU countries, not more than 1 in 20 young people reported having used new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs (so-called new psychoactive substances or “legal highs”). In the UK, Latvia and Poland, self-reported use of these substances was close to 10%. Respondents in Ireland, however, were the most likely to say they have used new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs (16%). Young people’s responses to this question, however, should be interpreted with caution as this category of substances could be understood to encompass a great variety of substances.

#### Experience with psychoactive substances



**Q5. In certain countries some new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs are being sold as legal substances in the form of - for example - powders, tablets/pills or herbs. Have you ever used such substances?**  
Base: all respondents, % by EU27

#### Where were young people offered such substances?



**Q6. Where were you offered such substances?**  
Base: those who had used new psychoactive substances  
% of mentions by EU27

A slim majority (54%) of respondents – who had used legal substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs – said a friend had offered them such substances and more than a third (36%) were offered such substances at a party or in a club. A third of these respondents had bought such substances in a specialised shop and less than a tenth (7%) had bought these via the Internet.



## 2. Becoming better informed about illicit drugs and drug use

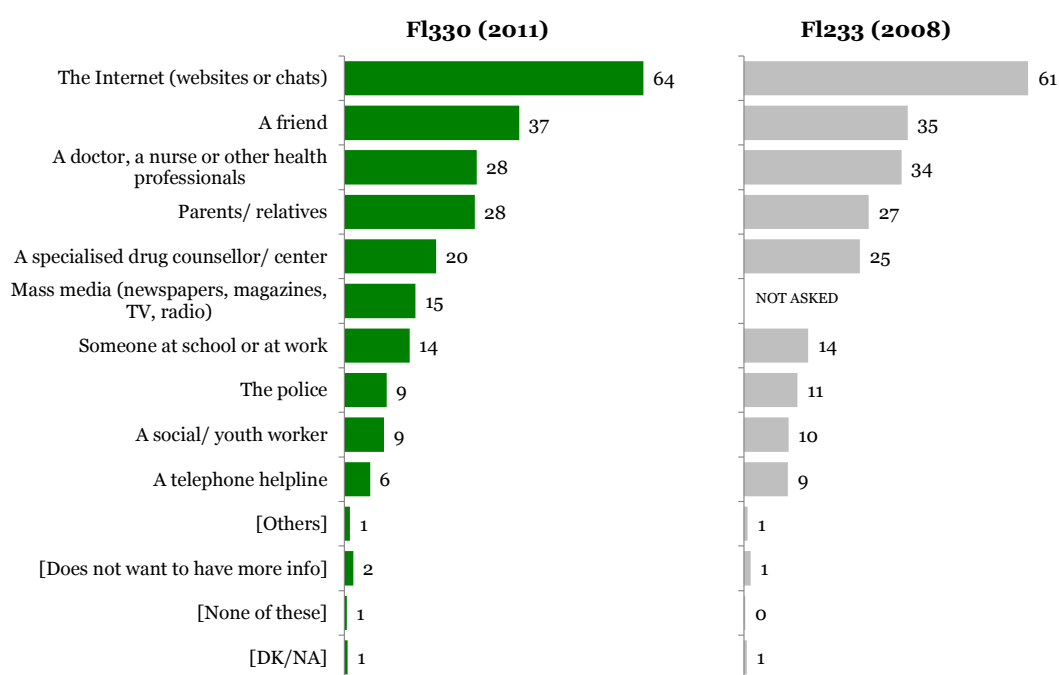
### 2.1 Potential sources of information

As in the 2008 Flash Eurobarometer on this subject, **the Internet** was the most popular source of information: 64% of 15-24 year-olds said they would use the Internet when looking for general information about illicit drugs and drug use. In sharp contrast, just 15% of respondents would consult mass media sources – e.g. TV, radio, newspapers or magazines – to learn more about drug-related issues.

Almost 4 in 10 (37%) respondents would turn to a **friend** in order to discuss issues relating to illicit drugs and drug use, while somewhat more than a quarter (28%) preferred to talk to **their parents or other relatives**. A **health professional, such as a doctor or nurse**, was also selected by 28% of interviewees and a fifth of young people would contact a **specialised drugs counsellor** or someone at a drugs centre.

Other sources of information listed in the survey were less popular with young people. About one in seven (14%) respondents would talk to someone at school or at work (e.g. a teacher, classmate or colleague). Small groups of respondents selected **the police** (9%), **a social or youth worker** (9%) or **a telephone helpline** (6%) to discuss drug-related issues.

#### Potential sources of information about illicit drugs and drug use, 2008-2011



Q1 (2011). If you wanted to have information about illicit drugs and drug use in general, who would you turn to? Please choose up to three.

Q1 (2008). If you wanted to have more information about illicit drugs and drug use in general, who would you turn to? Please choose up to three.

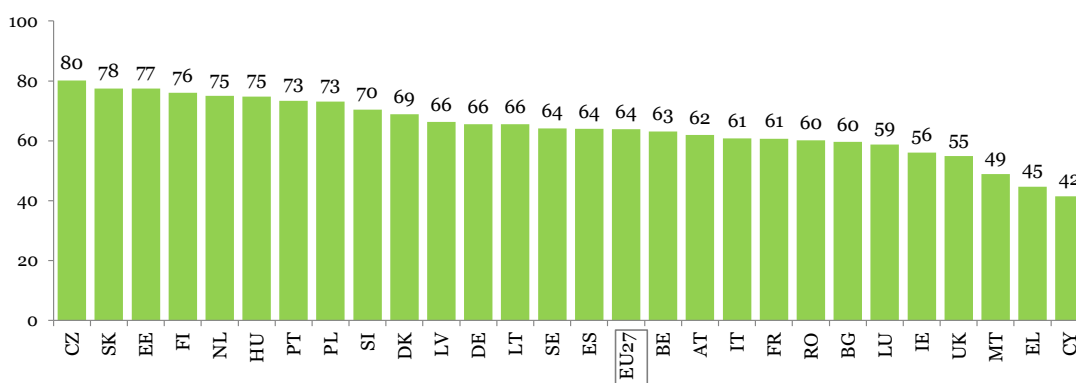
Base: all respondents, % of mentions by EU27

In all Member States, **the Internet** was the most popular source of information; this response was selected by the largest group of respondents. The countries with the highest proportions selecting this source of information were the Czech Republic (80%), Slovakia (78%), Estonia (77%) and Finland (76%).

In the UK and Ireland, a slim majority of young people said they would use the Internet when looking for general information about drug-related issues (55%-56%), while this figure dropped below 50% in Cyprus (42%), Greece (45%) and Malta (49%).

## Potential sources of information about illicit drugs and drug use

### *The Internet (websites or chats)*



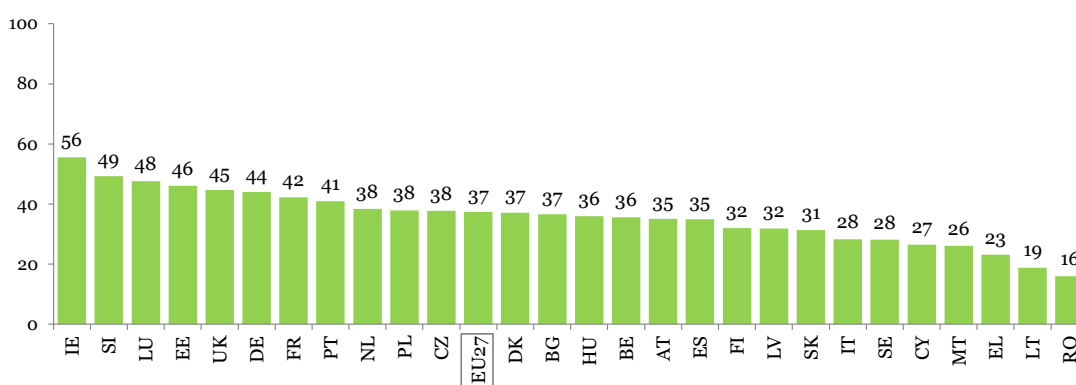
Q1. If you wanted to have information about illicit drugs and drug use in general, who would you turn to?  
Please choose up to three.

Base: all respondents, % of mentions by country

Talking to **a friend** was also one of the preferred methods of finding out more about drugs in almost all EU Member States – this information source appeared among the three most popular (listed) information sources in 22 countries. Although **parents or relatives** were generally less frequently mentioned than a friend as someone to talk to about drugs and drug use, they were the second most popular way to find information about the topic in two Member States and they came in third position in another 10 Member States. For example, 55% of respondents in the UK would search the Internet, followed by 49% who preferred talking to their parents or a relative.

## Potential sources of information about illicit drugs and drug use

### *A friend*



Q1. If you wanted to have information about illicit drugs and drug use in general, who would you turn to?  
Please choose up to three.

Base: all respondents, % of mentions by country

In Finland, Sweden and Romania, **a doctor or nurse**, or any other health professional, were more frequently mentioned than a friend, parents or relatives as someone young people would turn to when looking for information about drug-related issues. For example, 38% of young people in Finland would contact a health professional, followed by 32% who preferred talking to a friend. Respondents in Greece, Malta and Lithuania, in turn, were more disposed to select a **specialised drugs counsellor**.

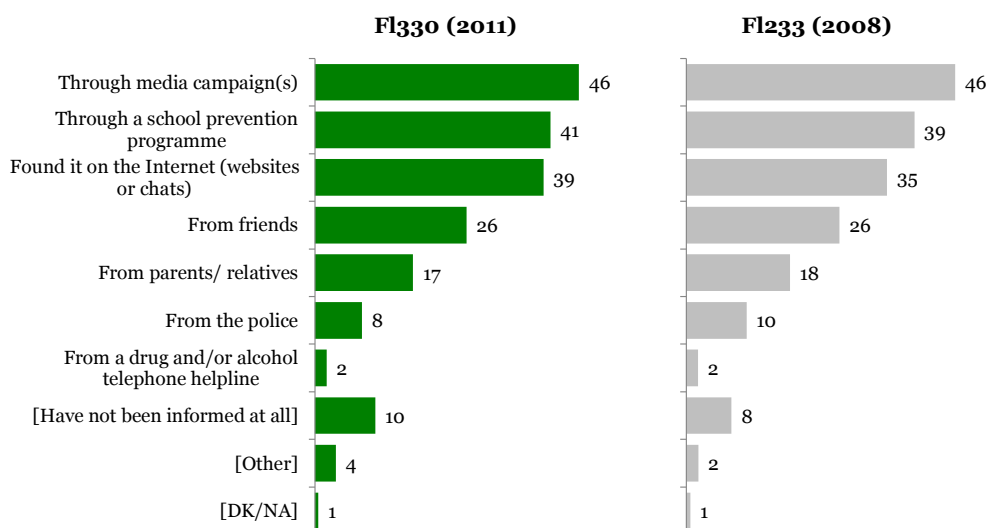
Higher proportions of **older respondents** said they would turn to more formalised/institutionalised information sources in order to discuss drug-related issues. For example, 34% of 22-24 year-olds said they would go to a health professional, compared to 23% of 15-18 year-olds. Furthermore, older respondents were more likely to search the Internet for drug-related information. Younger respondents, on the other hand, were more likely to prefer to get information from their friends, families or someone at school or at work. For example, 36% of 15-18 year-olds said they would talk to a parent or another relative, compared to 25% of 19-21 year-olds and 21% of 22-24 year-olds.

## 2.2 Information channels used in the past year

When asked through which information channels young people had actually been informed about the effects and risks of illicit drug use during the past year, 39% of interviewees said they had found information on **the Internet**, compared to 46% who said they had been informed about drug-related issues through a **media campaign** and 41% who mentioned a **school prevention programme**. Compared to 2008, the gap between the proportion of young people who mentioned school prevention programmes and those who referred to the Internet has lessened – this suggests that the Internet has become somewhat more important as a source for drug-related information.

About a quarter (26%) said they had discussed drug-related issues with a **friend** in the past year, and roughly a sixth (17%) of respondents had been informed by their **parents or other relatives**. A minority of respondents said they had received information about the effects and risks of drug use from **the police** (8%) or by calling a **drug and/or alcohol helpline** (2%). Finally, 10% of respondents spontaneously said they had **not been informed at all** about the effects and risks of illicit drug use in the 12 months prior to the survey.

### Channels through which young people were informed about the effects and risks of illicit drug use, 2008-2011



Q2 (2011). Through which channels - if any - have you been informed over the past year about the effects and risks of the use of illicit drugs? Please choose up to three.

Q2 (2008). Through which of the following channels - if any - have you been informed about the effects and risks of illicit drug use over the past year? Please choose up to three.

Base: all respondents, % of mentions by EU27

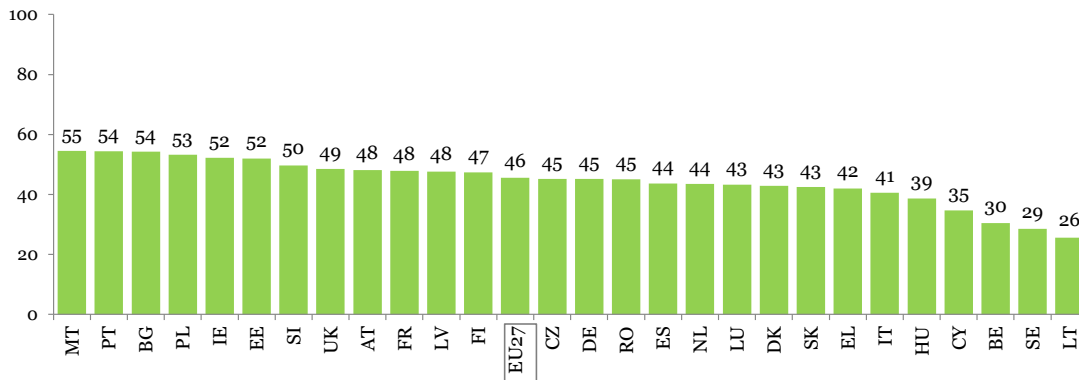
Of the seven potential channels listed in the survey, in all EU Member States, three were mentioned most frequently as young people's source for information about the effects and risks of illicit drug use: (1) **media campaigns**, (2) the **Internet** and (3) **school prevention programmes**.

**The Internet** was selected by the largest proportion of respondents in 11 Member States. Respondents in Slovenia, Estonia and Bulgaria were the ones making most use of the Internet (more than 60% selected this response).

In another 11 EU countries, **media campaigns** were the most frequently used information channel; in these countries, between 43% (in Denmark) and 55% (in Malta) of young people answered that they had received information about the risks and effects of illicit drug use through a media campaign organised during the course of the past year.

### Channels through which young people were informed about the effects and risks of illicit drug use

*Through media campaign(s)*

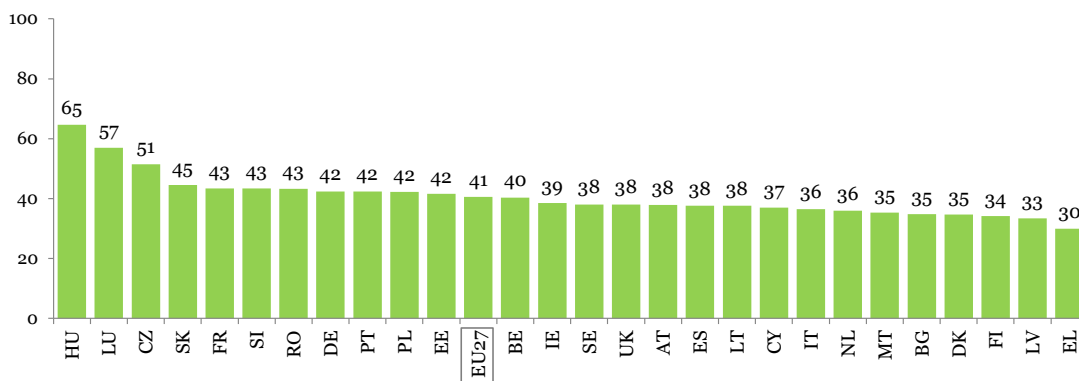


Q2. Through which channels - if any - have you been informed over the past year about the effects and risks of the use of illicit drugs? Please choose up to three.  
Base: all respondents, % of mentions by country

Although **school prevention programmes** also appeared among the three most popular methods for young people to learn more about illicit drugs in all EU Member States, it was the most popular information channel in just five countries: Hungary (65%), Luxembourg (57%), Slovakia (51%), Belgium (40%) and Sweden (38%).

### Channels through which young people were informed about the effects and risks of illicit drug use

*Through a school prevention programme*



Q2. Through which channels - if any - have you been informed over the past year about the effects and risks of the use of illicit drugs? Please choose up to three.  
Base: all respondents, % of mentions by country

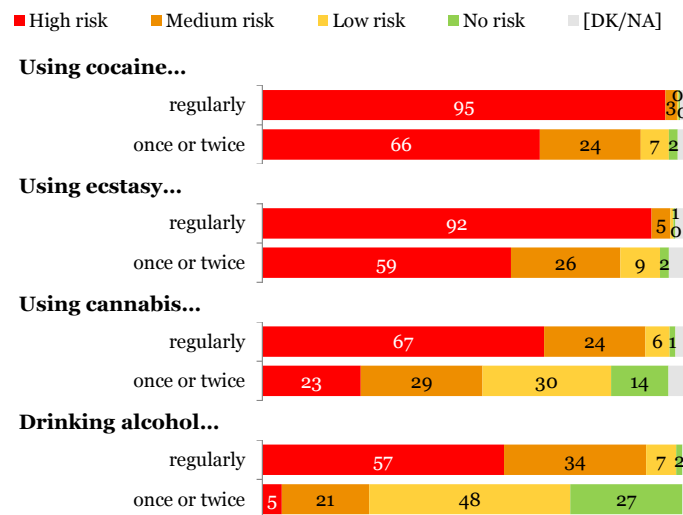
### 3. Perceived health risks of using drugs

For **cocaine** and **ecstasy**, the health risk of *regular use* was seen to be a certainty by almost all respondents; 95% and 92%, respectively, of them thought that using these substances on a regular basis would pose a *high* risk to a person's health. The picture was quite different for young people's perceptions about the health risks associated with *occasional use* of cocaine and ecstasy (i.e. using these substances *once or twice*); these risks were considered to be *high* by 66% and 59%, respectively, of young people. Roughly a quarter of 15-24 year-olds said that using cocaine (24%) or ecstasy (26%) *once or twice* posed a *medium* risk to a person's health.

Although a vast majority (91%) of young people recognised the health risks (*medium* or *high*) associated with *regular use* of **cannabis**, just two-thirds (67%) thought it might pose a *high* risk to a person's health. Furthermore, when asked to assess the health risks associated with *occasional use* of cannabis, only 23% thought this posed a *high* risk to a person's health and 29% considered the risks to be *medium*. Finally, 30% of 15-24 year-olds said that using cannabis *once or twice* posed a *low* risk to a person's health and 14% said there was *no risk* involved.

Lastly, looking at the results for **alcohol**, 91% of young people knew the health risks (*medium* or *high*) linked to *regular* consumption of alcohol; these risks were considered to be *high* by 57% of 15-24 year-olds. A handful of respondents also thought that drinking alcohol *once or twice* posed a *high* risk a person's health; nonetheless, a majority of young people thought this posed a *low* risk of *no risk* at all (48% "low risk" and 27% "no risk").

#### Perceived health risks of using drugs



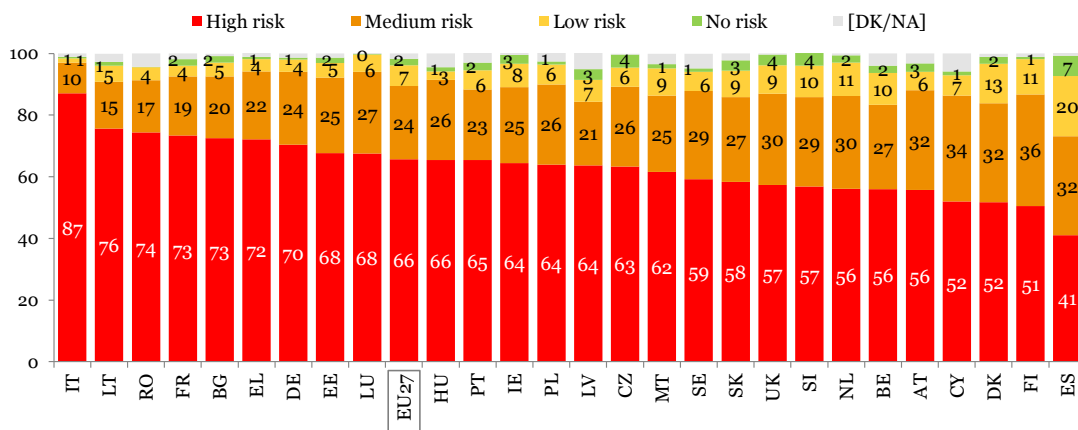
Q4. To what extent do you think the following substances may pose a risk to a person's health?  
Base: all respondents, % by EU27

Not much variation was seen between EU Member States in regard to the proportion of 15-24 year-olds who knew that *regularly* using **cocaine** or **ecstasy** posed a high risk to someone's health. However, looking at young people's perceptions about the health risks associated with *occasional* use of these substances, there were more variations across the different countries.

For example, while 41% of respondents in Spain said that using cocaine *once or twice* posed a *high* risk to someone's health, more than twice as many respondents (87%) in Italy were of the same opinion. Furthermore, 20% of young Spaniards considered the risks of *occasional* cocaine use to be *low* and 7% said there was *no risk* involved; in Italy, virtually none of the respondents selected these responses (1% each).

## Perceived health risks of using drugs

Using cocaine once or twice



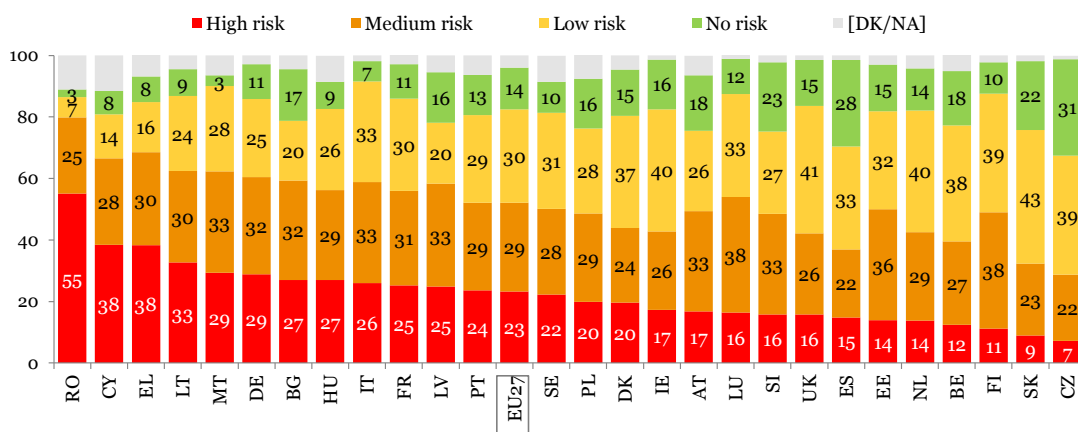
Q4. To what extent do you think the following substances may pose a risk to a person's health?  
Base: all respondents, % by country

Similar to the results obtained for the EU27 overall, in most Member States, the proportion of respondents who said that *regular* cannabis use might pose a *high* risk to a person's health was significantly smaller than the proportion thinking that about ecstasy. The proportions of young people who thought that *regular* use of **cannabis** would pose a *high* risk to a person's health were the largest in Malta, Lithuania, Romania, Hungary and Cyprus (77%-81%).

Czech respondents were the ones with the least concern about the impact of *occasional* cannabis use on a person's health: just 7% thought the latter might pose a *high* health risk compared to 39% who thought this would pose a *low* risk and 31% who said there were *no risks* when using cannabis *once or twice*. Other countries where more than half of young people selected the "low risk" or "no risk" responses were Slovakia (65%), Spain (61%), Belgium, the UK and Ireland (all 56%), the Netherlands (54%) and Denmark (52%).

## Perceived health risks of using drugs

Using cannabis once or twice

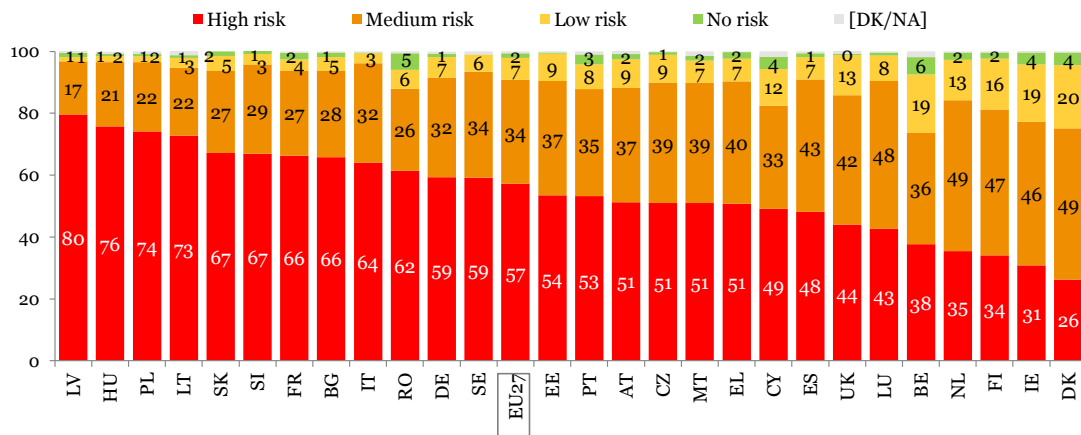


Q4. To what extent do you think the following substances may pose a risk to a person's health?  
Base: all respondents, % by country

The results about the perceived health risks linked to *regular alcohol use* showed the largest variation between Member States. The proportion of respondents who reasoned that *regular* alcohol use might pose a *high* risk to a person's health ranged from 26% in Denmark to 80% in Latvia. Furthermore, even when the Danish responses for "high risk" and "medium risk" were accumulated (giving a total of 75%), this was lower than the "high risk" category in Latvia (80%).

**Perceived health risks of using drugs**

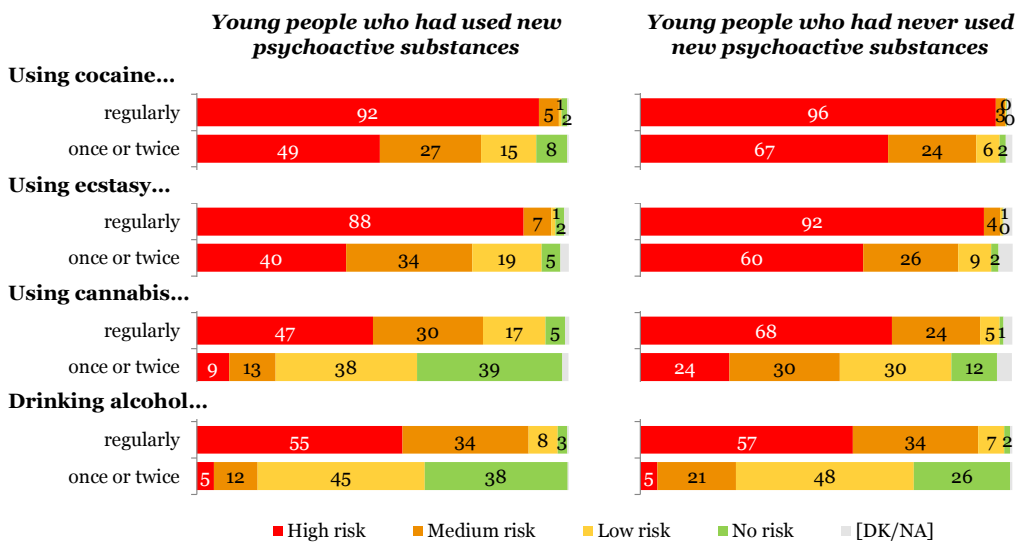
*Drinking alcohol regularly*



Q4. To what extent do you think the following substances may pose a risk to a person's health?  
Base: all respondents, % by country

**Young people who had used cannabis** also perceived the health risks associated with its use to be less serious. For example, just 36% of young people who had used cannabis in the past 12 months thought that the health risks associated with *regular* use of this drug were *high*; this proportion increased to 55% for respondents who had used cannabis, but not in the past 12 months, and to 75% for respondents who had never used cannabis. Furthermore, young people who had used cannabis *in the past year* were also less likely to perceive the health risks associated with *occasional* use of cocaine or ecstasy to be serious.

**Perceived health risks of using drugs**



Q4. To what extent do you think the following substances may pose a risk to a person's health?  
Base: all respondents, % by EU27

Although similar proportions of respondents answered that *occasional* use of cocaine or ecstasy would pose a *medium* or *high* risk to a person's health, **older respondents** were more likely to recognise the seriousness of the risks associated with these drugs, i.e. they were more likely to select the "high risk" versus the "medium risk" response. For example, 61% of 22-24 year-olds thought that using ecstasy *occasionally* posed a *high* risk to a person's health and 24% saw a *medium* risk. By comparison, 56% of 15-18 year-olds perceived the health risks caused by *occasional* ecstasy use as *high* and 28% as *medium*.



## 4. To ban or regulate illicit drugs and new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs?

### 4.1 To ban or regulate illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco?

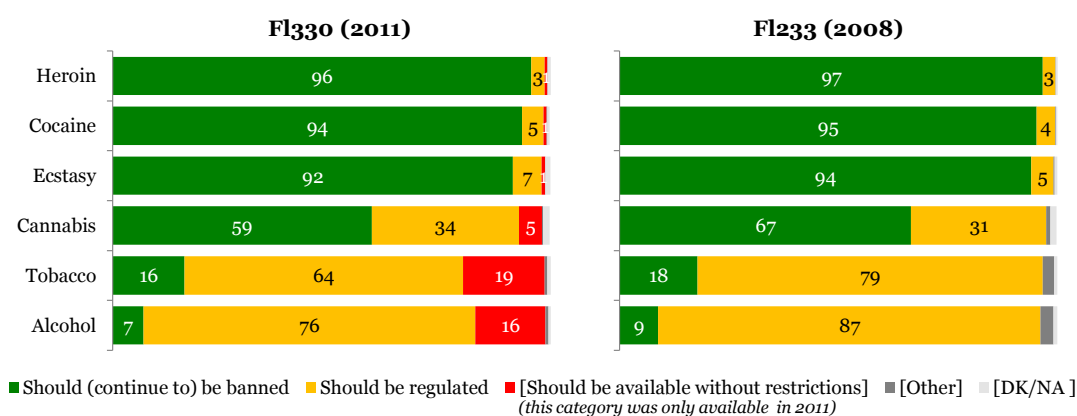
Drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, ecstasy and cannabis are banned in all EU Member States. The sale and consumption of legally-available substances, such as alcohol and tobacco, on the other hand, is regulated in most countries. Examples of such regulation are minimum age limits for the consumption of alcohol and tobacco and licensed sales of associated products through specialised shops.

There was a broad consensus among young people that **heroin**, **cocaine** and **ecstasy** should continue to be banned in EU Member States – almost all respondents agreed with this: 96% for heroin, 94% for cocaine and 92% for ecstasy. Only a minority of respondents would prefer to regulate one or more of these substances: 3% for heroin, 5% for cocaine and 7% for ecstasy.

Young people also regard **cannabis** differently from the other illicit substances in terms of whether it should be banned or if its sale and consumption should be regulated: 59% said the sale and consumption of cannabis should continue to be banned in EU Member States, compared to 34% who wanted the introduction of a system that regulated the sale and use of cannabis. It is also worth noting that 5% of interviewees *spontaneously* answered that cannabis should be available without restrictions. A comparison with the results obtained in 2008 showed that, in the current survey, a lower proportion of young people thought cannabis should continue to be banned (59% in 2011 vs. 67% in 2008)<sup>1</sup>.

When asked about **tobacco**, 64% agreed that its sale should continue to be regulated, 19% *spontaneously* said that tobacco products should be available without restrictions and 16% thought that the government should actually ban the product. An even smaller group of respondents (7%) said that **alcohol** should be prohibited instead of simply regulated, while about three-quarters (76%) of respondents preferred to continue regulating the sale and consumption of alcohol and almost a sixth (16%) *spontaneously* said that alcoholic drinks should be available without any restrictions.

#### To ban or regulate certain substances? (2008-2011)



Q7 (2011). The sale of drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and heroin is officially banned in all EU Member States. The sale of legal substances such as alcohol and tobacco is not prohibited but is regulated in all EU countries. Do you think the following substances should (continue to) be banned or should they be regulated?

Q5 (2008). Drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and heroin are banned in all EU Member States. The sale and consumption of legal substances such as alcohol and tobacco is not prohibited but regulated in most countries. Do you think the following substances should (continue to) be banned or regulated?

Base: all respondents, % by EU27

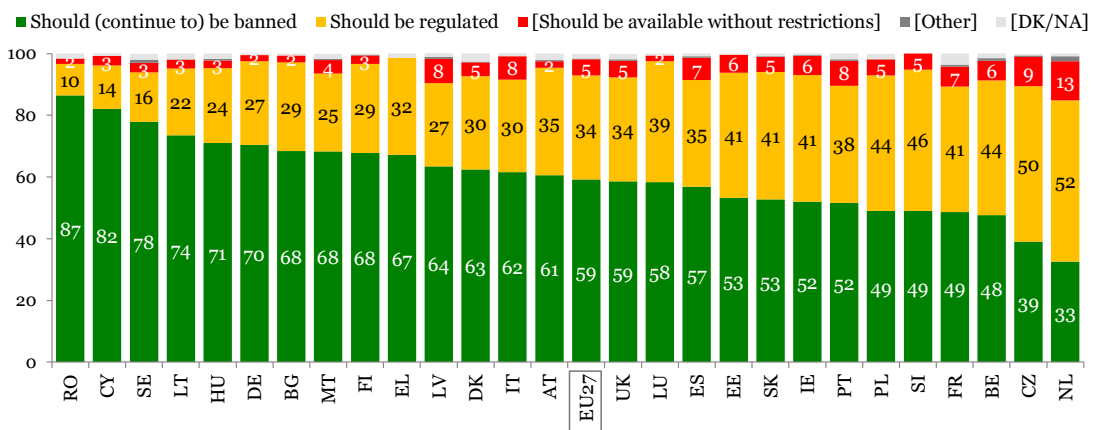
<sup>1</sup> A spontaneous response option “should be available without restrictions” was introduced in 2011. This option was not read out by the interviewers; only when respondents *spontaneously* gave this response, interviewers coded their response in this category. In 2008, if respondents *spontaneously* answered that cannabis (or another substance) *should have been available without restrictions*, these responses were coded as “other” responses.



The individual country results showed a broad consensus concerning the continuation of a ban on heroin, cocaine and ecstasy. In almost all EU countries, 90% – or more – of respondents were in favour of keeping a ban on these substances and less than 10% wanted the government to adopt regulations to control the sale and consumption instead of continuing to prohibit them.

The opinions of young people in the different Member States were more diversified when they were asked if **cannabis** should continue to be banned; the proportion thinking that governments should uphold such a ban ranged from 33% in the Netherlands to 87% in Romania. As in 2008, the Czech Republic was close to the Netherlands: about half of Dutch and Czech respondents (52% and 50%, respectively) said the sale and consumption of cannabis should be regulated, while roughly a tenth *spontaneously* said that cannabis should be available without restrictions (13% and 9%, respectively).

**Cannabis** should (continue to) be banned or regulated

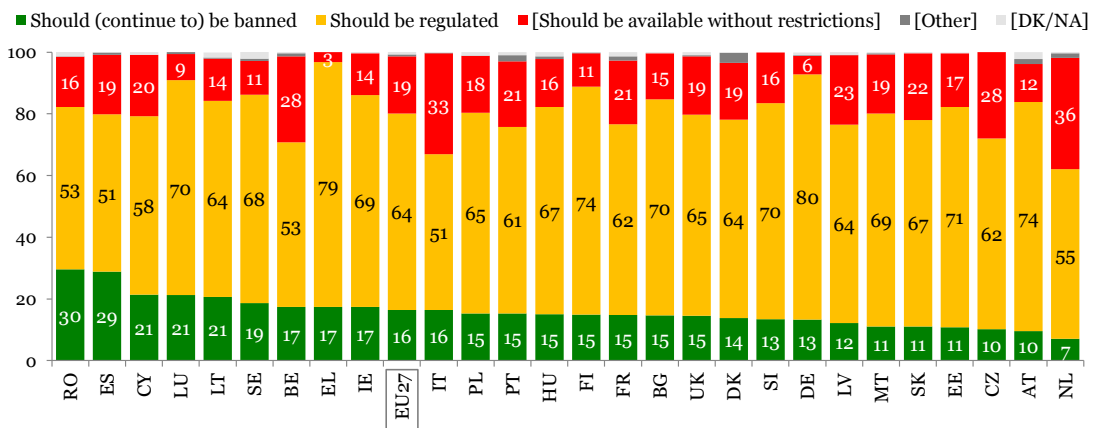


Q7. The sale of drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and heroin is officially banned in all EU Member States. The sale of legal substances such as alcohol and tobacco is not prohibited but is regulated in all EU countries. Do you think the following substances should (continue to) be banned or should they be regulated?  
Base: all respondents, % by country

Roughly 3 in 10 young people in Spain and Romania (29%-30%) were in favour of banning **tobacco**; in the Netherlands, however, just 7% thought that tobacco products should be banned. More than a third (36%) of interviewees in the Netherlands *spontaneously* said that tobacco products should be available without restrictions – a figure similar to the one observed in Italy (33%).

Young people in Romania were also the strongest advocates of banning **alcohol**: 15% were in favour of such a ban. In fact, Romania was the only country with more than 10% of young people who thought alcohol should be banned.

**Tobacco** should (continue to) be banned or regulated



Q7. The sale of drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and heroin is officially banned in all EU Member States. The sale of legal substances such as alcohol and tobacco is not prohibited but is regulated in all EU countries. Do you think the following substances should (continue to) be banned or should they be regulated?  
Base: all respondents, % by country

About 7 in 10 (71%) young people who had never used cannabis said that this drug should continue to be banned, while a quarter wanted the introduction of a system that regulated its sale and use. By comparison, just 17% of **respondents who had used cannabis** in the past year advocated a ban on cannabis, compared to 64% who wanted the government to adopt regulations to control its sale and consumption; furthermore, 18% of these respondents *spontaneously* answered that cannabis should be available without restrictions.

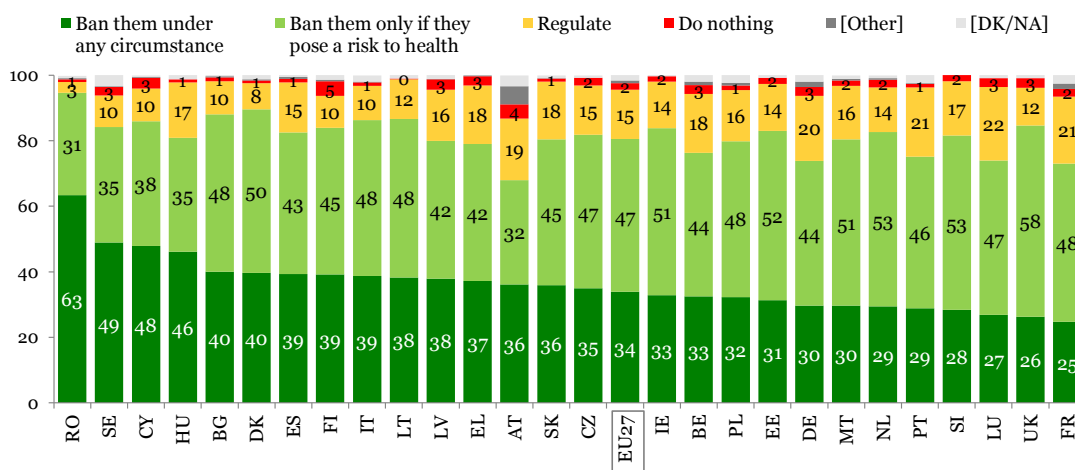
Roughly 4 in 10 young men and metropolitan residents (38%-39%) would support a system that regulated the sale of **cannabis**, compared to 29% of women and 30% of rural residents. Roughly two-thirds of women (66%) and rural residents (64%) thought that governments should uphold the ban on cannabis; this figure was also higher than 60% for 15-18 year-olds (61% vs. 58% of 19-21 year-olds).

#### 4.2 To ban or regulate new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs?

Roughly a third (34%) of respondents thought that the best response would be to ban *all substances* that imitate the effects of illicit drugs, while about one in two (47%) interviewees thought it would be better to ban *only those substances that posed a risk to someone's health*. About one in seven (15%) respondents said the sale and consumption of new psychoactive substances should be regulated.

The proportions of young people who preferred to look at the risk to someone's health when deciding which new substances to ban were the highest in the UK (58%), Malta, Ireland, Estonia, the Netherlands and Slovenia (all 51%-53%). In only five countries, respondents who wanted to ban all new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs outnumbered those who thought it would be better to ban only those new psychoactive substances that posed a risk to someone's health: Romania (63% vs. 31%), Sweden (49% vs. 35%), Cyprus (48% vs. 38%), Hungary (46% vs. 40%) and Austria (36% vs. 32%). Respondents in Germany, Portugal, France and Luxembourg (all 20%-22%) were somewhat more likely than their counterparts to think that the best way to deal with new psychoactive substances was to regulate them.

#### Appropriate way to handle legal substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs



Q8. What would be an appropriate way to handle new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs and that are sold as legal substances?

Base: all respondents, % by country

A quarter of **respondents who reported having used new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs** said the sale and consumption of such substances should be regulated, compared to 15% among respondents who had never used such substances. Furthermore, young people who had used new substances that imitate the effect of illicit drugs and were in favour of a ban on such substances were considerably more likely to prefer a ban on specific psychoactive substances, rather than on all of them.

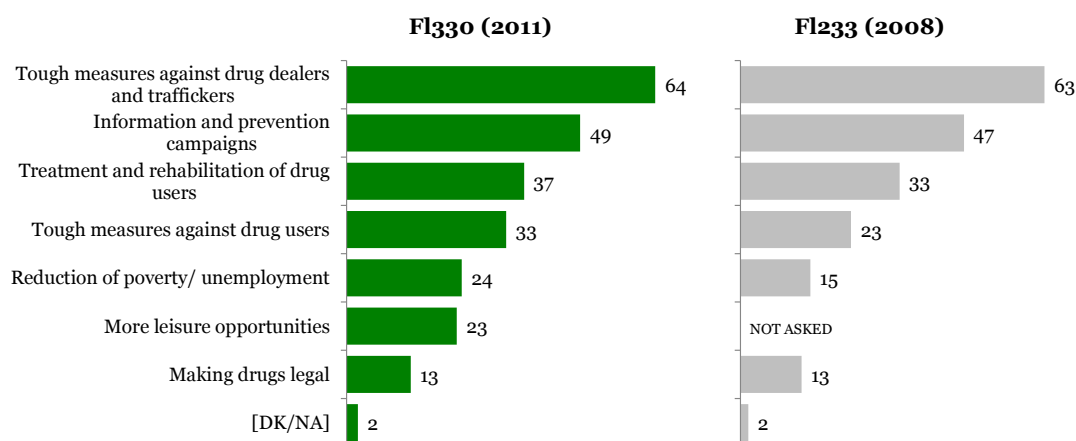
## 5. How should society's drug problems be tackled?

As in the 2008 Flash Eurobarometer, the largest proportion of respondents thought that public authorities should tackle problems on the supply side of the drug economy: 64% mentioned **tough measures against drug dealers and traffickers** as one of the most effective ways that public authorities could reduce drug problems.

When it came to dealing with the demand side – the drug users – young people thought that prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of drug users, would be more effective than tough measures against drug users. Nearly half of respondents (49%) chose **information and prevention campaigns** as one of the most effective ways of reducing drug problems; the **treatment and rehabilitation of drug users** followed, with 37% of respondents choosing this as an effective measure. By comparison, **tough measures against drug users** were considered to be a valuable way of dealing with drug problems by a third of respondents.

Reducing one of the possible root causes of drug abuse – i.e. **poverty and unemployment** – was mentioned by 24% of interviewees. A similar proportion (23%) thought that offering **more leisure opportunities** would be an effective way of dealing with drug problems. As in 2008, the **legalisation of drugs** was judged to be the least effective way of fighting drug problems: 13% of young people, however, did select this measure as one of the most helpful ones.

### Most effective ways for public authorities to reduce drug problems, 2008-2011



Q3 (2011). What do you think are the three most effective ways for public authorities to reduce drugs problems?  
Base: all respondents, % of mentions by EU27

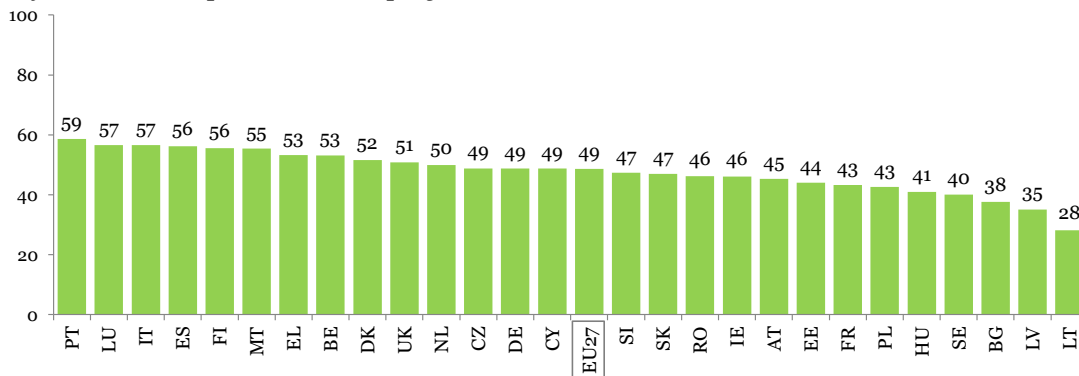
Q4a (2008). What do you think is the most effective way for public authorities to deal with drug problems in society?  
Q4b (2008). What would be the second most effective way?  
Base: all respondents, % of total mentions by EU27

Across all but one of the EU Member States (the exception being Denmark), a majority of young people mentioned **tough measures against drug dealers and traffickers** as one of the most effective ways that public authorities could reduce drug problems; the proportion selecting this measure ranged from 49% in Denmark to 81% in Romania.

Contrary to young people in other countries, the largest proportion of young Danes did not select tough measures against drug dealers and traffickers, but preferred to reduce drug problems by **organising information and prevention campaigns** (selected by 52%). Respondents in Malta, Finland, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal were overall the most likely to select this measure (55%-59%).

### Most effective ways for public authorities to reduce drug problems

#### Information and prevention campaigns



Q3. What do you think are the three most effective ways for public authorities to reduce drugs problems?

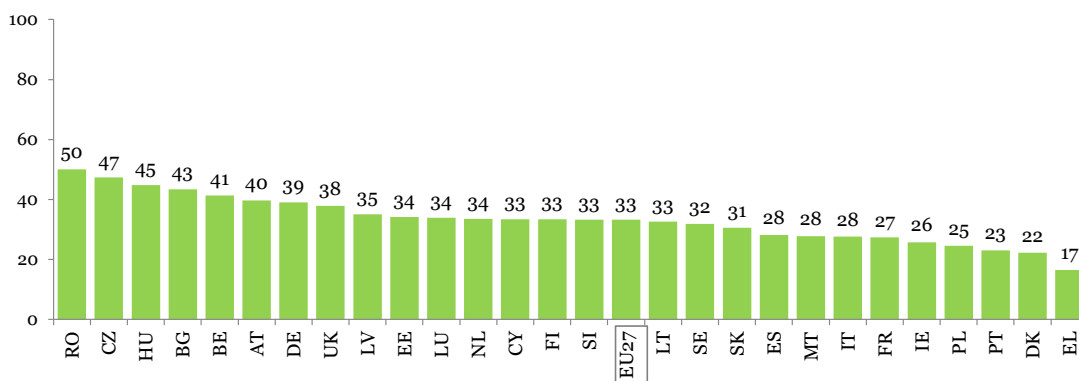
Base: all respondents, % of mentions by country

The proportion of respondents who thought that the **treatment and rehabilitation of drug users** was one of the most effective ways for public authorities to reduce drug problems ranged from less than a third in Slovakia (24%), Belgium (26%), the Netherlands (27%), France (28%), the Czech Republic (29%) and Austria (32%) to about half of respondents in Portugal (50%) and Greece (52%).

In a majority of EU Member States, the proportions listing “tough measures against drug dealers and traffickers”, “information and prevention campaigns” and “the treatment and rehabilitation of drug users” as effective ways of reducing drug problems were larger than the proportion selecting “**tough measures against drug users**”. Young people in Hungary (45%), the Czech Republic (47%) and Romania (50%) were the most likely in the EU to choose tough measures against drug users as one of the most effective ways of reducing drug problems.

### Most effective ways for public authorities to reduce drug problems

#### Tough measures against drug users



Q3. What do you think are the three most effective ways for public authorities to reduce drugs problems?

Base: all respondents, % of mentions by country

In almost all Member States, as with the average EU results, a smaller group of respondents chose the **legalisation of drugs** as being one of the most effective ways of fighting drug problems. Young people in Portugal, Slovenia, Ireland and France were the ones who most favoured the legalisation of drugs as a way of reducing the various problems: about one in five (20%-22%) respondents in these countries thought that this would be beneficial.

Looking at respondents' age, the largest differences were seen for opinions about the effectiveness of **reducing poverty and unemployment** as a strategy to reduce drug problems: 22% of 15-18 year-olds selected this measure as one of the most helpful ones, compared to 27% of 22-24 year-olds.