

What is new on Ecstasy in France? Shapes, rates and users' perceptions.

Authors: Thomas Néfau, Magali Martinez, Agnès Cadet-Tairou, Michel Gandilhon
Emerging Trends and New Drugs (TREND) and National Detection System of Drugs and Toxic Substances (SINTES) network.

The tablet form called "ecstasy" experienced a gradual loss of interest during the 00's because of its bad reputation (low purity, scams, "old-fashioned") [1]. After the 2009 shortage, crystal and powder forms saw their availability increase, along with higher purity level, while the tablet form has experienced a comeback since 2013 [2].

In 2014, 4.3% of the 18–64-year-olds declared they had experimented MDMA and/or ecstasy in their lifetime vs. 2.7% in 2010. MDMA/ecstasy consumption during the last 12 months concerned 0.9% (400,000 persons) of the 18–64-year-olds, vs 0.3% (150,000 persons) respectively. Moreover, MDMA and/or ecstasy lifetime use at 17 clearly increased, from 1.9% in 2011 to 3.8% in 2014 [3].

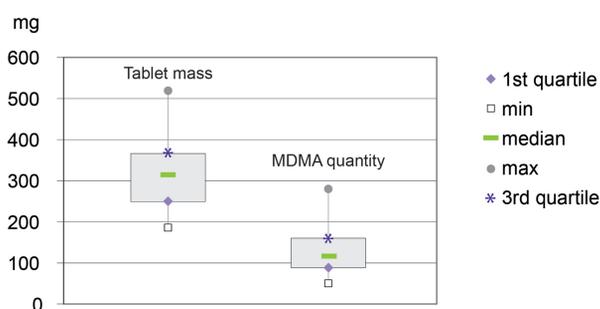
To better assess the current composition of the ecstasy on the market, the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction launched a tablet collection, including a short survey which provided information on the perceptions of the users about this drug.

Between December 2014 and May 2015, a total of 103 ecstasy tablets were collected and analysed and as many consumers were surveyed. It is to note that much of the survey was conducted in festive scenes which correspond to a particular audience. People among whom the tablets were collected were aged 17 to 50-year-olds (median age was 26) and were mostly men (84%).



MAIN RESULTS OF THE 2015 OFDT SURVEY ON ECSTASY CONSUMPTION

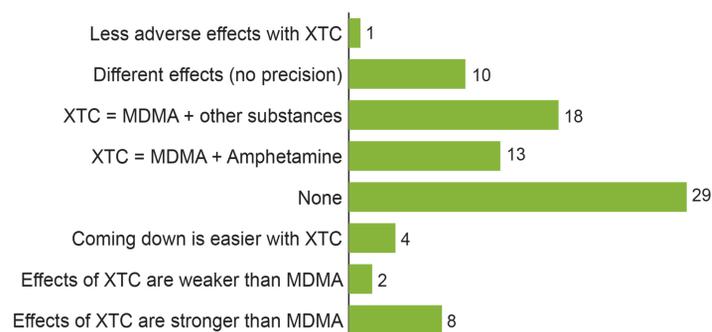
Tablet mass and MDMA dosage (n=90)



The masses of the tablets increased since 2014, with values ranging from 186 to 516 mg and a mean value of 316 mg. In 2008 and 2013, the mean mass value of the seized tablets was lower than 250 mg and 300 mg respectively.

In parallel, the quantity of MDMA inside the tablet has been increasing from an average value of less than 100 mg in 2013 to an average value of 125 mg in 2015. Quantities greater than 250 mg were also observed with a maximum value around 280 mg.

In your opinion, is there a difference between ecstasy and MDMA?



Many of the young users think that ecstasy and MDMA are two different drugs.

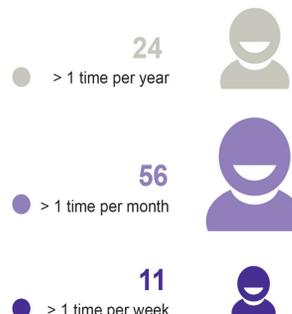
85 answers were valid, of which only 60 provided details on the product itself, the other answers rather talked about the effects. Of these 60 answers, 29 persons knew that MDMA and ecstasy are the same drug with different shapes, but 31 persons stated that ecstasy differs from MDMA and corresponds to a mix of MDMA and one or more substances.

A significant part of the respondents (n=13) thought that ecstasy contains MDMA and amphetamine, or MDMA and others substances (n=18).

It can be assumed that the greater variability of MDMA found in the collected tablets of ecstasy, compared to the MDMA powder, yielded different feelings about the two forms. But the most likely hypothesis is that users have maintained their distrust towards the ecstasy composition which grew gradually during the first decade of 21st century.

And they do right as despite of the ecstasy renewed attraction back and its abundance on the market, we observed numerous classic scams like PMMA, chloroquine, amphetamine, mCPP and paracetamol tablets sold as ecstasy (11 collected samples of 103).

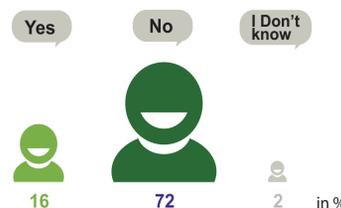
Ecstasy consumption



Results do not reflect the general population consumption and perception about ecstasy, as the majority of survey participants came from the alternative party scene.

The majority of participants (74%) declare to have a regular consumption with at least one consumption per month (62%) or one per week (12%). One participant out of four declared an infrequent consumption (at least once a year). None of the respondent declared it was a first use.

Is it hard to find Ecstasy?



This is somewhat a new feature as powder or crystal form of MDMA were exclusively present in the beginning of the 2010's and ecstasy was difficult to find.

CONCLUSION

This survey confirms the increase of high-dosages MDMA in the ecstasy tablets. The pictures of the collected tablets illustrates the new shapes of tablets, bigger, more colourful and with 3D forms.

The new and sudden rise of the ecstasy availability can be related to the development of the NPS, which are sources of new pre-precursors, as well as a potential competition for the European market of MDMA. Following the period when the ecstasy became old-fashioned, the goal of the dealer is now to reconquer the market, with the aim of reaching the youngest users unfamiliar with ecstasy and who are the most likely to consider ecstasy and MDMA as two different substances. The fall and rise of this drug has probably led to a disruption of knowledge among users. Consequently, attention should be paid to the spreading of harm reduction messages about the MDMA and/or ecstasy consumption, especially toward young users. The high dosages observed in the survey constitute a serious harm to their health.



References

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