

# In a glimpse

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## Use of psychoactive substances among 17-year-olds in the French overseas territories (ESCAPAD 2023)

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In 2023, the ESCAPAD survey conducted by the OFDT interviewed 2 869 seventeen-year-olds in Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Réunion, New Caledonia and French Polynesia. The results confirmed that levels of psychoactive substance use were often lower than those observed in mainland France, while also highlighting marked territorial disparities.

### Tobacco and alcohol: lower levels of use, except in New Caledonia

In most overseas territories, 17-year-olds consumed less tobacco and alcohol than their counterparts in mainland France. The lowest rate of daily smoking was recorded in Guadeloupe (5.0% compared with 15.6% in mainland France).

New Caledonia stood out as an exception, with a rate of daily smoking at age 17 of 24.6%. Regular alcohol use there was higher than in mainland France (11.2% compared with 7.2%) and had been steadily increasing since 2017. Repeated episodes of heavy episodic drinking (three or more episodes in the past month involving the consumption of at least five alcoholic drinks on a single occasion) were also very common there (30.2%, compared with 13.6% in mainland France), and in French Polynesia (22.8%).

### Cannabis and other substances: marked geographical contrasts

Three territories stood out for higher regular cannabis use compared to mainland France: Réunion, French Polynesia and New Caledonia. In contrast, Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana reported lower levels, declining for several years, as in mainland France.

Regarding other illicit substances, Réunion stood out with levels of lifetime use of cocaine and ecstasy/MDMA above the national average. Similarly, in French Guiana, lifetime use of crack cocaine reached 1.3%, more than triple the level observed in mainland France (0.4%).

### Particular attention required for Pacific territories

Over the past 20 years, the differences between the overseas territories and mainland France have remained relatively stable. Most territories have followed trends similar to those observed in mainland France. Only the Pacific territories (New Caledonia and Polynesia) have shown persistently high levels of use, with some indicators even increasing. This trend is particularly pronounced among girls, calling for heightened vigilance in terms of prevention, support and harm-reduction measures.

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- In 2023, the ESCAPAD survey questioned 2 869 seventeen-year-olds from Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Réunion, New Caledonia and French Polynesia.
- Seventeen-year-olds in Guadeloupe, Martinique, Reunion and French Guiana reported lower levels of tobacco and alcohol use than their counterparts in mainland France.
- In New Caledonia and French Polynesia, the rates of heavy episodic drinking were higher than in mainland France.
- In Polynesia and New Caledonia, the use of psychoactive substances at age 17 was higher than in mainland France for all substances, especially among girls. Three territories showed higher rates of regular cannabis use: Réunion, French Polynesia and New Caledonia.
- In Réunion, cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy/MDMA use among 17-year-olds were higher than among their counterparts in mainland France.
- In French Guiana, lifetime use of crack cocaine was three times higher than in mainland France.