

YOUTH AND PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES¹

The survey entitled “Psychoactive substance use among school adolescents – Youth 2010”, whose results are presented herein, was commissioned and financed by the National bureau for Drug Prevention. The survey was conducted by the CBOS Foundation between 15 October and 15 December 2010.

The “Youth 2010” survey was conducted with the application of quantitative method on a nationwide sample of 65 schools (one class per school), including general education secondary schools, technical secondary schools and vocational schools. The survey included 1246 students. The interviews with students were conducted through random selection method between 2 and 19 November 2010.

The survey included final class students of upper-primary and upper-middle schools, day adolescent schools (excluding special schools), aged 18-19, who had followed the curricula of the primary and then the middle school.

The object of the survey was to measure the prevalence of use of both legal illegal substances (alcohol, tobacco, legal highs, drugs), examine attitudes of the survey participants towards drugs and assess their availability. The students were asked questions about politics, democracy and economy. A battery of questions in the survey was devoted to school-related issues (e.g. student rights, opinions about teachers, violence). Moreover, the adolescents were asked about their involvement in gambling activities and their plans, ambitions and life aspirations.

Drug use

The 1990s witnessed a rise in the consumption of psychoactive substances among adolescents. New substances such as ecstasy entered the drug market along with new routes of administration. Amphetamines became more popular than brown sugar. Organized crime

¹ This text is part of the survey report “Psychoactive substance use among school adolescents. Youth 2010”, which covered use of drugs and legal highs. The 2010 survey is part of a series of measurements taken since 1992. In the latest survey questions regarding gambling were added. The whole report in Polish is available at the website of the Information Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction of the National Bureau for Drug Prevention: <http://www.cinn.gov.pl/portal?id=302772> (news) or under reports section: <http://www.cinn.gov.pl/portal?id=166545>

syndicates took control of drug manufacturing and dealing. Poland, along with Belgium and the Netherlands, became one of the leading amphetamine manufacturers in Europe. An increased demand for psychoactive substances generated higher supply, which resulted in a fall in drug prices. These substances were becoming widely available. In 1999-2000 the first National Programme for Counteracting Drug Addiction was implemented. It placed equal emphasis on combating drug-related crime (supply reduction) and taking action aimed at reducing demand for drugs. Demand reduction activities included prevention, treatment, post-rehabilitation and harm reduction. After the local administration reform of 1999, local governments were actively involved counteracting drug addiction. First positive signals of stopping the growth of drug use were recorded in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. The latest school survey showed stabilization or even a decline in drug use. This survey was conducted between 15 October and 15 December 2010, i.e. just after the closure of shops selling legal highs.

Availability of drugs

In surveys, students are asked about the availability of drugs. Their answers are used in monitoring the illegal market of drugs and actions of services responsible for combating drug-related crime. Students were asked about places to buy drugs, drug offers, drug dealing at school and whether they consider it hard to obtain respective psychoactive substances.

In 1994 every fifth respondent (22%) knew from whom or where to buy drugs, in 2003 it was almost a half (49%). Moreover, in 2003 every fourth survey participant did not know where drugs are available, which means that 75% declared that they knew sites where drugs can be obtained or they could easily find it out. Since then a proportion of student knowing where to buy drugs has fallen. However, in 2008 there was a rise (up to 40%) in young people who declared that they did not know where to buy drugs. In 2010, this proportion held steady (38%). Boys consider it easier to get drugs than girls. The bigger the place of residence the lower the proportion of students who do not know drug dealing sites. It must be stressed that the answers can be influenced by a number of factors, including media reports of police actions against drug-related crime, especially regarding police raids on drug dealing sites. A more useful indicator in describing the availability of psychoactive substances is the question about drug offers.

As of 1994 the number of students who had been offered to buy drugs was systematically rising. The highest level was reached in 2003 when almost a half of the survey participants (47%) had come across such offers. Then the proportion of respondents who were

offered to buy drugs started falling. It dropped by half, from 14% in 2003 to 6% in 2010. The latest measurement demonstrated that there is a small proportion of students who are frequently offered to buy drugs. There is also a systematic fall in the number of students who get exposed to several offers (from 26% in 2003 to 21% in 2008 and 18% in 2010)

Moreover, it must be noted that in 2010, 67% of the survey participants reported that they had never been offered to buy drugs. Boys received such offers more frequently (40%) than girls (25%).

In 1996, students started to be asked about drug dealing in school. Between 1996 and 2003, the question whether drugs can be obtained on school premises had 30% of negative answers, in 2008 it was 50% and in 2010 more than 50%. The proportion of positive answers after the fall recorded two years ago (from 26% to 10%) held steady in 2010 (9%). At present, 13% of vocational school students (14% in 2008), 11% of technical secondary schools (13% in 2008), 8% of specialized, technical and vocational secondary schools (11% in 2008) and 6% of general education secondary schools (4% in 2008) report drug dealing activities in their schools.

In the last two surveys (2008 and 2010), students were asked how hard it is to obtain psychoactive substances. Adolescents of lawful age do not see any problems in obtaining legal substances – cigarettes, beer, wine and vodka (94%-95%). Almost half of the students (48%, 45% in 2008) consider it easy to obtain cannabis. The highest rise in drug availability was recorded in terms of legal highs. In 2008, only 16% of students considered it easy get them; however, in 2010 this proportion stood at 36%. In 2008 the network of legal highs shops was just starting up while in 2010 there over 1 400 of them in the whole country. The substances which were considered the hardest to obtain included DXM, salvia divinorum, poppers as only few students thought it was easy to get them.

Analyzing the breakdown of answers according to which it was impossible to obtain psychoactive substances other than alcoholic beverages, it must be noted that in most substances, the proportion of students who made such declarations ranged from 20% to 27%. The percentages of students who considered it hard to obtain most of the psychoactive substances ranged between 24% and 33%. The harder it was get a given substance the higher was the number of students who were unable to assess how difficult it was to get it. The exception were legal highs (19%) and tranquillizers and sedative (15%), where the percentages were lower.

One of the indicators to describe drug use among adolescents is the presence of drugs in their environment. In 2003, for the first time students were asked whether in their environment, their friends (acquaintances) there is someone who uses drugs. In 2010, similarly to 2008, every second survey participant (53% and 53% respectively) knew such a person. The results of the latest measurement can be a sign of the stabilization of drug use among adolescents as in 2003 the percentage of the survey participants who reported that they knew drug users was higher (67%).

Drug use

The students were asked about experiences related to using drugs. Since 1992 the students have been answering questions about drug consumption in the last 12 months prior to survey. If the answer is positive, they are asked to list the substances they have used. In 2008, for the first time the students were asked to tick the substances listed in a questionnaire, which included legal highs.

The students also answered the question about drug consumption in the last 30 days prior to survey (current use), the last 12 months (recent use) and finally their lifetime experience with drug use.

This way of asking question allows to precisely determine the prevalence of drug use. Moreover, by supplementing the survey with a list of substances the term “drugs’ has been defined. Comparing answers to both questions constitutes material for in-depth analyses. In the case of the substance list question the percentages of students are higher compared to the question which made them name any drug. It is caused by the fact that the participants were able to name only three substances out of the ones they have used.

In 1992-2003 the number of students who have used drug in the last year was steadily rising (from 5% to 24%). In 2008 the percentage of students who reported using drugs fell to 15% and the latest survey it remained on the same level (16% in 2010).

Table 1.

Have you used drugs, psychoactive substances in the last year?	CBOS statutory survey			IPiN survey	KBPN survey		
	IV '92	IV '94	IV '96	XII '99	XII '03	X '08	XI '10
	%						
Yes	5	10	10	18	24	15	16
No	95	90	90	82	76	85	84

Students who have used drugs were asked to name the substances. In 2010 82% of the students who have used drugs in the last 12 months, mentioned marijuana (rise of 6% compared to 2008) and 11% reported amphetamine use (fall of 3%).

The most dramatic decrease in psychoactive substance use was recorded with reference to ecstasy. Out of those students who reported using drugs in the last 12 months in 2008, 10% mentioned ecstasy, whereas in 2010 it was only 1%. On the other hand 13% of the survey participants reported using legal highs in 2010. The other substances ranked as follows: hashish – 5%; cocaine – 3%; heroin, mephedrone and hallucinogenic mushrooms – 2%.

The 1992 survey showed that boys used drugs more frequently than girls. In 2008, 23% of schoolboys and 9% of schoolgirls gave positive answers to the questions about illegal substance use. In 2010, 20% of boys and 10% of girls admitted to using drugs.

The highest percentage of drug users was recorded in vocational schools (22%; 21% in 2008) followed by technical secondary schools (16%; 15% in 2008) and general education secondary schools (14%; 15% in 2008).

Among students with average grades of 2s and 3s, the contact with psychoactive substances was confirmed by 15% of the survey participants (19% in 2009), among students with average grades of 4s it was 14% (10% in 2008) and among the students with the best grades (5s) the percentage stood at 13% (the same as in 2008). The higher the average school grades, the lower the level of declared drug consumption.

According to the previous measurements the higher the education level of mothers the higher the percentage of students taking drugs. In the 2008 survey, 21% of the participants whose mothers held post-secondary school education admitted to using drugs, while among those whose mothers held vocational education it was 11%. In the 2010 survey the mother of every fourth students who reported using drugs had post-secondary education compared to 14% of students whose mothers had vocational education.

The highest percentage of students who reported using drugs live in cities with population between 20 thousand and 100 thousand (22%) and the lowest in cities with population between 100 thousand and 500 thousand (13%).

A protective factor for experimenting with drugs is the involvement in religious practices. This pattern was recorded in previous surveys. Every fourth participant who was not involved in religious practices admitted to using drugs. In the case of religious practitioners this percentage ranges from 10% (practising once a week) to 18% (several times a year).

Similarly to 2008, the factor for the likelihood of illicit substance use is economic migration of the participants' parents. Contact with drugs was declared by 21% of the students whose parents have worked abroad in the last 12 months and 14% of those whose parents have not worked abroad in the last year. It should be noted that drug use was most prevalent among students whose mothers have worked abroad (29%).

Types of drugs

The general term 'drugs' includes a number of substances of various effects ranging from stimulants to sedatives. As it has been mentioned, in 2008 the survey questionnaire featured questions regarding patterns of drug use among adolescents. The respondents were asked to tick off a drug on a list if they have used it in the last 30 days, 12 months or ever in a lifetime. Individuals who reported using drugs in the last 30 days were also classified under the category 'last 12 months' and 'lifetime prevalence'. Consequently, percentages of answers to these questions cannot be totalled. The breakdown of answers is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Psychoactive substance	Have you ever used any of the following substances?							
	No, never.		Yes, I have.		Including:			
					Yes, in the last 12 months		Yes, in the last 30 days	
	2008	2010	2008	2010	2008	2010	2008	2010
	%							
Cannabis	69,1	63,0	30,5	35,7	16,4	18,0	7,3	7,7
Tranquilizers and sedatives without doctor's prescription	77,9	78,4	21,8	19,9	11,2	9,6	4,7	3,8
Alcohol combined with pills	87,4	85,6	12,2	12,8	7,1	6,5	3,1	3,0
Alcohol combined with marijuana	82,2	79,2	17,3	19,1	10,1	10,6	4,9	4,9
Amphetamine	90,6	91,0	9,0	6,8	3,7	3,0	1,1	1,5
Ecstasy	94,3	94,8	5,5	3,5	3,0	1,4	1,1	0,8
Inhalants	96,8	95,3	2,9	2,8	1,0	0,7	0,6	0,5
LSD or other hallucinogens	97,5	94,9	2,3	3,3	1,3	1,4	0,5	0,7
Hallucinogenic mushrooms	96,1	94,7	3,6	3,4	2,0	1,4	1,1	0,6
Cocaine	97,5	94,8	2,2	2,3	1,1	0,7	0,6	0,6
Crack	98,6	95,8	1,2	2,3	0,5	0,6	0,4	0,5
Relevin	99,1	96,7	0,8	1,4	0,4	0,4	0,3	0,3
Heroin	98,5	96,3	1,3	1,9	0,6	0,8	0,1	0,5
Polish heroin "kompot"	98,6	96,5	1,1	1,6	0,6	0,5	0,3	0,5
GHB	98,9	96,9	0,9	1,3	0,5	0,3	0,3	0,3
Anti-cough or anti-cold medication	96,5	93,6	3,2	4,7	1,9	2,2	0,9	1,1

taken in order to get high								
“ Legal highs”	96,4	86,8	3,5	11,4	2,6	7,2	1,5	1,1
Dextromethorphan (DXM)	98,8	97,0	1,0	1,3	0,6	0,4	0,5	0,2
Anabolic steroids	96,4	95,2	3,4	2,9	1,9	0,9	0,7	0,5
Poppers	94,8	95,3	4,8	3,0	2,4	1,3	0,8	0,9
Salvia divinorum	97,5	95,5	2,1	2,6	1,1	1,0	0,6	0,4

This breakdown does not include unavailable data
KBPN survey

The most prevalent substance among adolescents was cannabis. Lifetime prevalence of cannabis use in 2010 was 36%, which is higher by 5% compared to 2008. Comparing percentages of students who used cannabis in the last 12 months and 30 days in 2008 and 2010 measurements we can see narrower differences than in the case of lifetime prevalence rates. In 2010, 18% of students had used cannabis in the last 12 months prior to survey (16% in 2008) and 8% in the last 30 days (7% in 2008). Use of tranquilizers and sedatives without doctor’s prescription is currently reported by 20% of students (22% in 2008), 10% in the last 12 months (11% in 2008) and 4% in the last 30 days (5% in 2008).

The second most prevalent substance after cannabis is amphetamine. In 2008, 9% of students admitted to experimenting with this substance (7% in 2010). In the last 12 months prior to survey, 4% of student had used amphetamines (3% in 2010). In the last 30 days it was 1% in both measurements.

Analyzing the distribution of drug consumption by sex we notice that ecstasy was twice as popular among boys (4%) compared to girls (2%). A similar case was in cannabis use: 43% and 29% respectively.

The prevalence of amphetamine use is also higher among boys (8%) than girls (5%). Only in the case of tranquilizers and sedatives (without doctor’s prescription), anti-cough and anti-cold medication (used in order to get high) and pills combined with alcohol were the prevalence use rates higher among girls. For tranquilizers and sedatives the prevalence rates were 14% (boys) and 27% (girls); for anti-cough or anti-cold medication 4% (boys) and 5% (girls) and pills combined with alcohol 9% (boys) and 16% (girls). The table lists a non-existing substance called *relewin*. The question concerning consumption of “this drug” was asked in order to verify the reliability of answers. In 2010, 1.5% of students admitted to using this non-existing substance (1% in 2008). The results of both measurements can be biased by 1% with the latest one to a higher extent.

Legal highs

In 2008, legal highs started to be monitored. This term includes a whole range of different types of substances of psychoactive effects or even those which do not have such qualities. They can be classified under the following categories: powders, salts, tablets and herbal concoctions. They include natural substances such as the kava-kava plant or lab-manufactured BZP or mephedrone. One should mention a group of chemical substances which form the basic component of herbal concoctions, e.g. JWH-018 or JWH-122, which are substitutes of THC (active substance in marijuana) and have similar effects to cannabis use. Legal highs include both new substances such as mephedrone and those known for ages e.g. salvia divinorum. Only some of these substances have stimulating effects, which suggested by the Polish name “dopalacze” (afterburners). In the latest survey, students were asked what legal highs they bought.

In 2008, legal highs were used by 4% of students. In 2010, this group rose to 11%. 7% of students admitted using legal highs in the last 12 months prior to survey (3% in 2008) and 1% in the last 30 days (2% in 2008). It must be noted that in the last 30 days, prevalence rates were higher in 2008 compared to 2010. It might have been the result of the closure of legal highs shops. Mind you, the survey was conducted following the closure of the network of shops selling legal highs. Consequently, the sale of these products dropped. In the 2010 survey, students were asked an additional question about legal highs, which was intended to estimate the scale of this new phenomenon on the drug market. One issue was the knowledge of the term. 90% of the survey participants had heard about legal highs, every fourth (27%) had visited a legal highs shop. Out of those who visited such shops, 40% made a purchase. Students were asked about the number of days prior to survey when they made a purchase in a shop selling legal highs. Those who shopped there, most frequently (15%) did it two months prior to survey.

The object of the survey was also the issue of types of products bought by students. Out of those who made a purchase, 31% bought herbal concoctions, most frequently the product called Tajfun (6%) as well as pills or tablets, e.g. Amfibia (5%). Sniffing powders were relatively popular (6%). It must be stressed that some students who reported buying legal highs did not specify the type of substance or its brand name. Apart from psychoactive substances legal highs shops offered drug paraphernalia. Few survey participants (3.5%) purchased such products, e.g. rolling paper or water pipes. Legal highs are also sold online. This method of purchase was chosen by 1% of the survey participants.

Students were also asked how many times they had used substances listed in the questionnaire. The most prevalent drug was cannabis. It had been used once or twice in a lifetime by 15% of students, 3-9 times by 10%, 10-39 times by 6% and more than 40 times by 5%. More or less every eighth student reports that he or she has used tranquilizers and sedatives without doctor's prescription 1-2 times, 5% have done it 3-9 times. The analysis of the distribution of answers to the question about the frequency of using the respective substances shows that in most substances students have used them 1-2 times.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS²

The results of the 2008 survey showed a decrease in the prevalence of cigarette smoking and drug use among school adolescents. In the case of alcohol the prevalence rates were similar to the results of the 2003 measurement. The 2010 survey showed that in most psychoactive substances their use had not changed since 2008. Cigarette smoking remained at the same level (23% compared to 22%).

However, there were alarming signals that after the period of decline in alcohol consumption there might be a rise.

Analyzing the consumption of alcohol we notice comparable percentages of students who in the last month have not drunk beer (22% in 2008, 24% in 2010), wine (67% in both measurements). There was a fall in the number of students who abstained from vodka (from 42% in 2008 to 37% in 2010). However, there was an increase of 5% (up to 45%) in the number of students who reported getting drunk.

The results of drug use prevalence show a stabilization of illegal substance use. A major increase can be observed in the case of cannabis and legal highs.

There was a fall in the number of students who reported using drugs in the last 12 months prior to survey (from 24% in 2003 to 15% in 2008 and 16% in 2010).

In 2010, students were asked about the use of substances listed in a questionnaire. By responding to a question formulated in this way, 18% of the participants confirmed a contact with cannabis, 10% with tranquilizers and sedatives taken without doctor's prescription and 3% with amphetamine in the last 12 months. The results showed that there was a rise in the

² Summary also refers to alcohol and cigarette consumption, which have not been included in the English summary but have been discussed in the Polish version of the report.

percentage of cannabis users and a decline in users of tranquilizers/sedatives and amphetamine. Similar trends were observed in lifetime prevalence rates which were the following: cannabis - 36% of students (31% in 2008), pharmaceuticals – 20% (22% in 2008) and amphetamine – 7% (9% - 2008). The results of prescription tranquilizers and sedatives taken without doctor's consent must be interpreted with caution as individual students included herbal drugs in this category. The answers might be biased in the prevalence of this substance use.

In the previous survey there were signals of an increase in ecstasy use. The 2010 measurement demonstrates the reverse – there was a fall in the number of students using ecstasy, from 6% to 4%. The survey participants, when asked about naming three drugs which they had used in the last 12 months prior to the 2010 survey, mentioned ecstasy ten times less often compared to 2008. It might have been the effect of the arrival of legal highs, which were mentioned much more frequently than ecstasy.

The survey shows that drugs are not substances used by most students. They are also not the way Polish adolescents spend their leisure time as it is often portrayed by the media. The vast majority of students limit their contacts with drugs to experimenting. The exception is cannabis, which was used more than ten times by every tenth survey participant. Analyzing the distribution of the cannabis answers it must be noted that this drug is most prevalent among medium-sized city students (20-100 thousand population). Those cities also featured the highest percentages of students who positively answered the question about the use of any drug in the last 12 months.

Summing up the results of the availability of drugs it must be noted that the latest measurement, along with the 2008 one, indicates a decrease in the availability of psychoactive substances. Only in the case of legal highs has there a clear increase in the availability in the last two years, which was caused by the rapid development of the sale network (closed in October 2010). However, according to students it was still harder to obtain legal highs than cannabis.