



# Substance (ab)use and life habits among university students in Leuven, Belgium

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Eusuhm 2015, Tallinn



# Background

- Student Health Center as a part of Student Services



- Students can visit general practitioner/ psychologist/ psychiatrist

- Focus on prevention and information



- 1993 / 2003 / 2013

Questionnaires about substance use and life habits



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# Methods

- Electronic questionnaire: 122 questions
- 13 861 Bachelor and Master students (Dutch programs)
- Launch April 2013

## Main themes



### Substance use

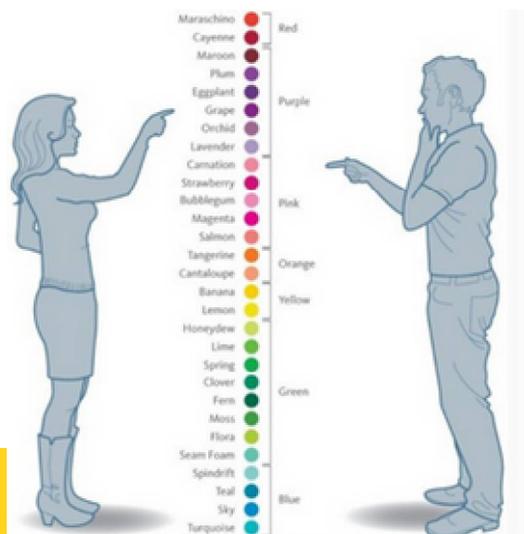
- Alcohol 
- Tobacco 
- Drugs 
- Medication 

### Life habits

- Leisure time (internet)
- Sleeping patterns
- General well-being
- Social network

# RESULTS

- 4777 respondents (34.6%)
- Age between 18 and 24 years
- 67.6% girls (n=3228) and 32.4% boys (n= 1549)
- Bachelor and Master students



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# Alcohol

Prevalence	Ever	Last 12 months (of all respondents)
Beer 	92.2%	82.0%
Wine/Cava 	93.6%	87.6%
Aperitif 	72.2%	54.8%
Long drink, liquor 	85.4%	73.7%

# Beer

- Starting age: 60% < 16 years

- **Daily use!**

- During week: **9.1% of  daily!**

1.3% of  daily

- During exams: 1 of 5  at least weekly

1 of 20  at least weekly



# Wine / cava

- Starting age: 40% under 16 years
- **No daily use!**
- During week / holidays

1 of 4  and 1 of 3  at least weekly

- During exams

1 of 20 of all students at least weekly



# Aperitifs and liquor

## Aperitifs



- Starting age: 14% < 16y
- No daily use
- 1 of 8 students at least weekly
- **More in holiday time**
- Rarely during exams

## Liquor



- Starting age: 15% < 16y
- No daily use
- 1 of 5 ♂ and 1 of 8 ♀ at least weekly
- **More in weeks of academic year**
- Rarely during exams

# Problematic alcohol (ab)use

- **Irresponsible amount of drinking**

♂ : >21 units/week → 12.5%

♀ : >14 units/week → 5.6%

- **Binge drinking**

♂ : 6 units in 2 hours → 67.2% (1 of 3 at least monthly)

♀ : 4 units in 2 hours → 50.7% (1 of 8 at least monthly)

- **Positive AUDIT**

♂ : 48.2%

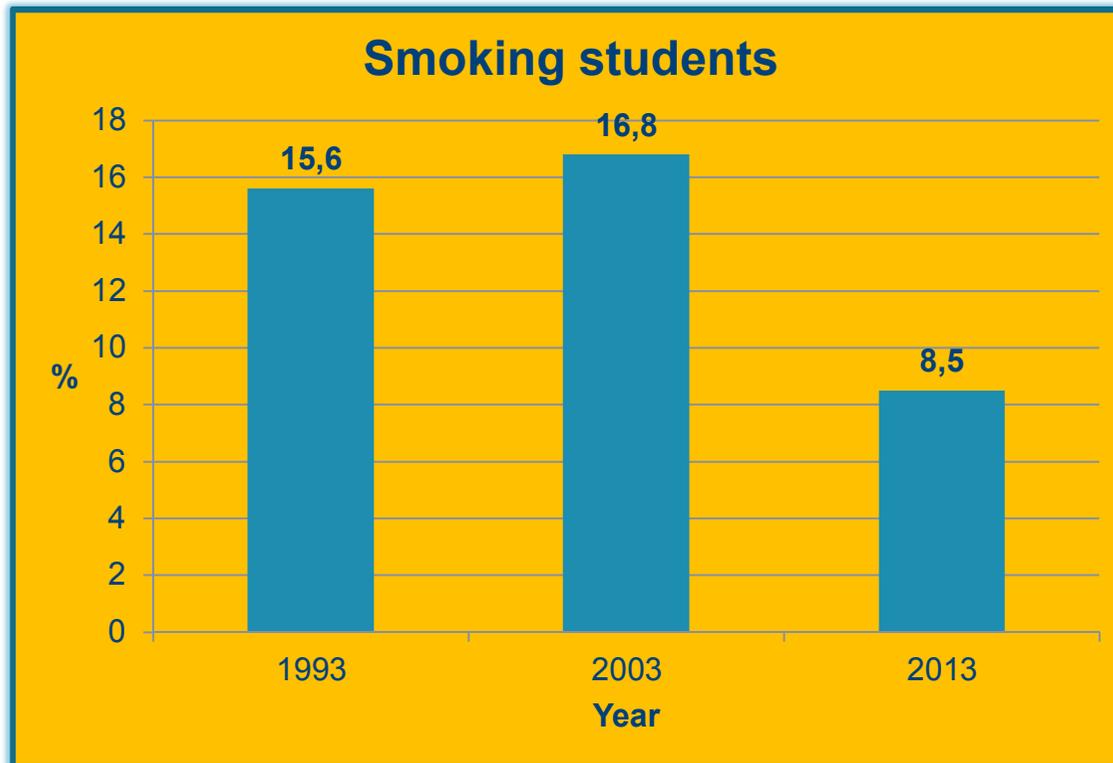
♀ : 46.2%



# Smoking tobacco

8.5% of all students smoke (50% daily, 50% not daily)

Evolution over years...



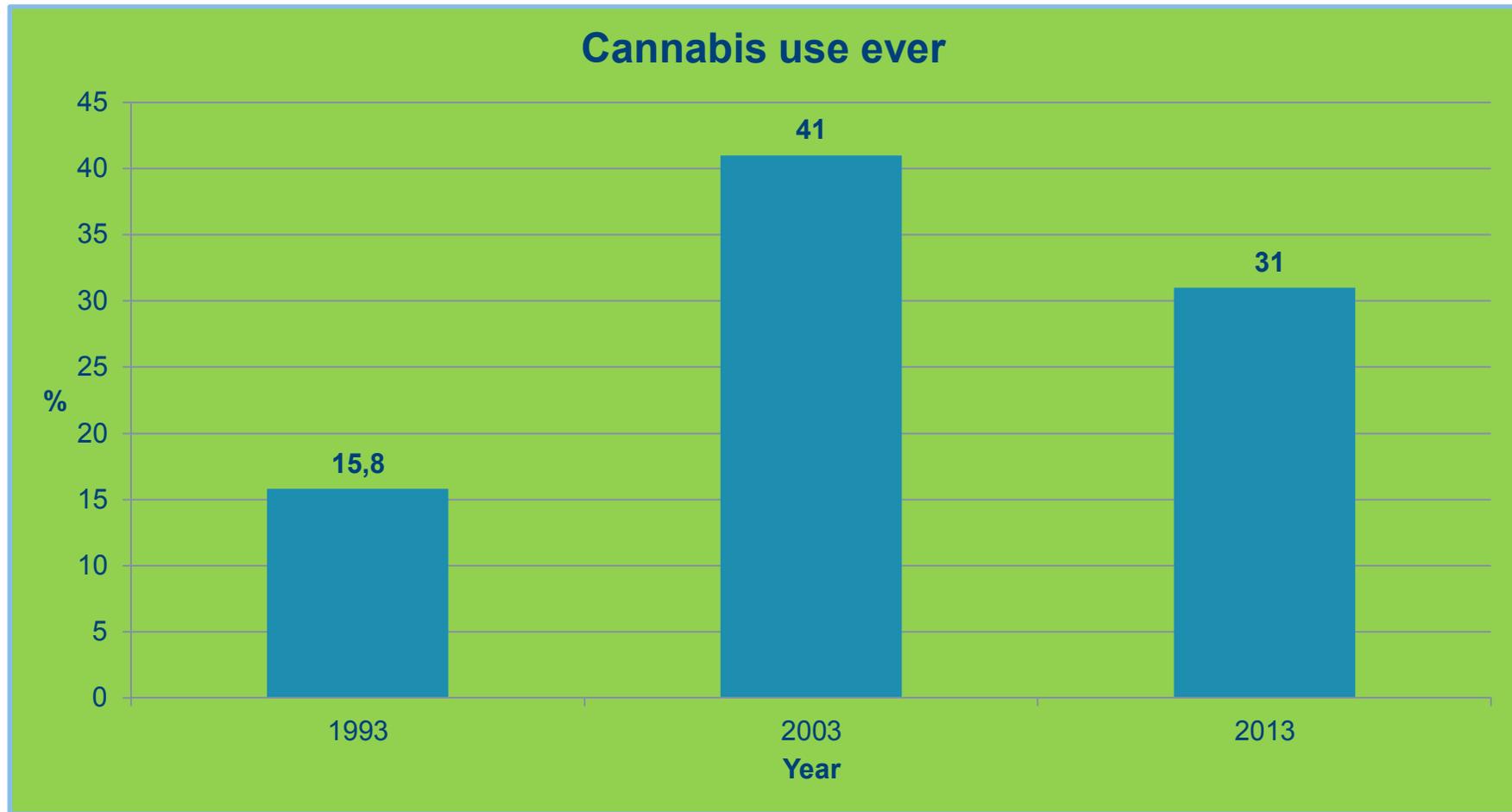
# Drugs



Prevalence	Ever	Last 12 months (of all respondents)
Cannabis	31.1%	14.9%
XTC	2.6%	1.2%
Amphetamines	1.5%	0.6%
Coke	1.9%	0.9%
Hallucinogens	2.5%	1.0%



# Cannabis: evolution over years...



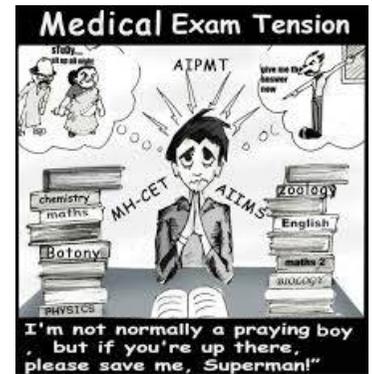
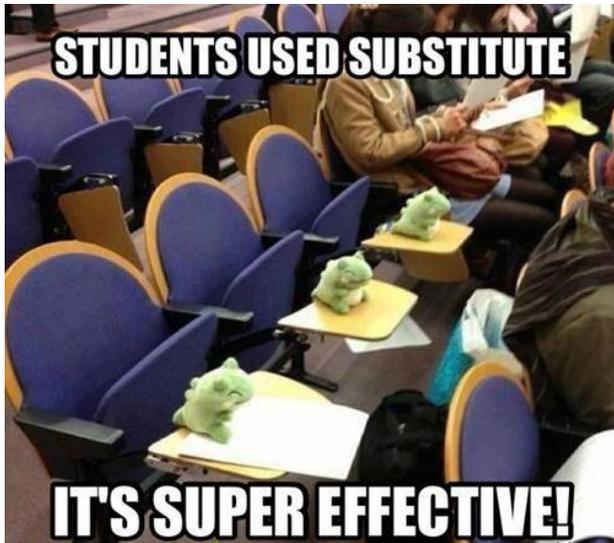
# Medication

Prevalence	Ever	Last 12 months (of all respondents)
Painkillers	NA	 62.0%  83.9%
Sleeping-/ calming medication	10.5%	 5.2%  8.0%
Stimulating medication	6.2%	 6.0%  3.2%

1 of 2 students without medical reason !!



# Life habits – leisure time....



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# Sleeping habits

- **Amount of sleep**

**Weekend** > week > pre-exam period > **exam period**

- **Quality of sleep**

**pre-exam period** >= week > **exam period**

- **Studying whole night**

20.6%

- **Feeling rested**

66.7%

- **Taking a nap during the day**

30%

1 of 2 students have naps > 30 minutes!



# Internet use → everybody

- 88.3 %  $\geq$  2 hours a day (12.2%  $>$  6 hours a day)
- 8.4% signs of compulsive internet use

Social network sites:      - everybody  
   - 44.5%  $>$  2 hours

Internet for studies:        -everybody  
   -43.3%  $>$  2 hours

Gaming:                    -1 of 2 students  
   - ♂ (13.4%  $>$  2 hours)  $>$  ♀ (1.7%  $>$  2 hours)

Internet for music, films, search,...: 90%

# General well-being

- Using General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)

**38.0%** have signs of mental problems

I do not feel sad.  
I feel sad.



# Correlations mental well-being - variables

- **Substance use**

- Less use of medication
- More frequent use of alcohol
- Binge drinking
- Non-smokers and non cannabis use

} Mental well-being ↑

- **Leisure time**

- Going to pubs/parties
- Visiting friends
- Go in for sports

} Mental well-being ↑

# Correlations mental well-being - variables

- **Study-behaviour**

- Frequently attending lessons
- No skipping classes
- No studying late / no studying all night
- Frequently preparing for exams

Mental well-being ↑



# Correlations pos. AUDIT score - variables

## Students with signs of problematic alcohol use...

- Have less good study efficiency
- Skip more classes
- Live in student rooms
- Have friends and parents who are more often drunk
- Go to pubs and parties
- Started drinking at a young age / drink frequently
- Are less rested and take more naps
- Have more signs of compulsive internet use

# Social network

- Who would you **talk to** when you realise you might have a problem of substance (ab)use?
  - **To friends:** 90%
  - To parents/ siblings/ family doctor: 50%
  - To psychologist: 30%
  - Call centers/ help-lines: 15%
- Did you already **go to** somebody for substance abuse?
  - 0.7% ( family doctor > psychologist)



# CONCLUSIONS

- Results are used as a base for health promoting campaigns/ specific health care
  - October 2015: **alcohol campaign** (organised by University with all pubs in Leuven / police)
  - AUDIT included in questionnaire used at **health check up all freshmen.**
  - **Buddy program and Project “Mindmates”:** students taking care for peers.
- Electronic questionnaire every “4” years to track evolutions

# Thanks for your attention!

