



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

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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



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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%

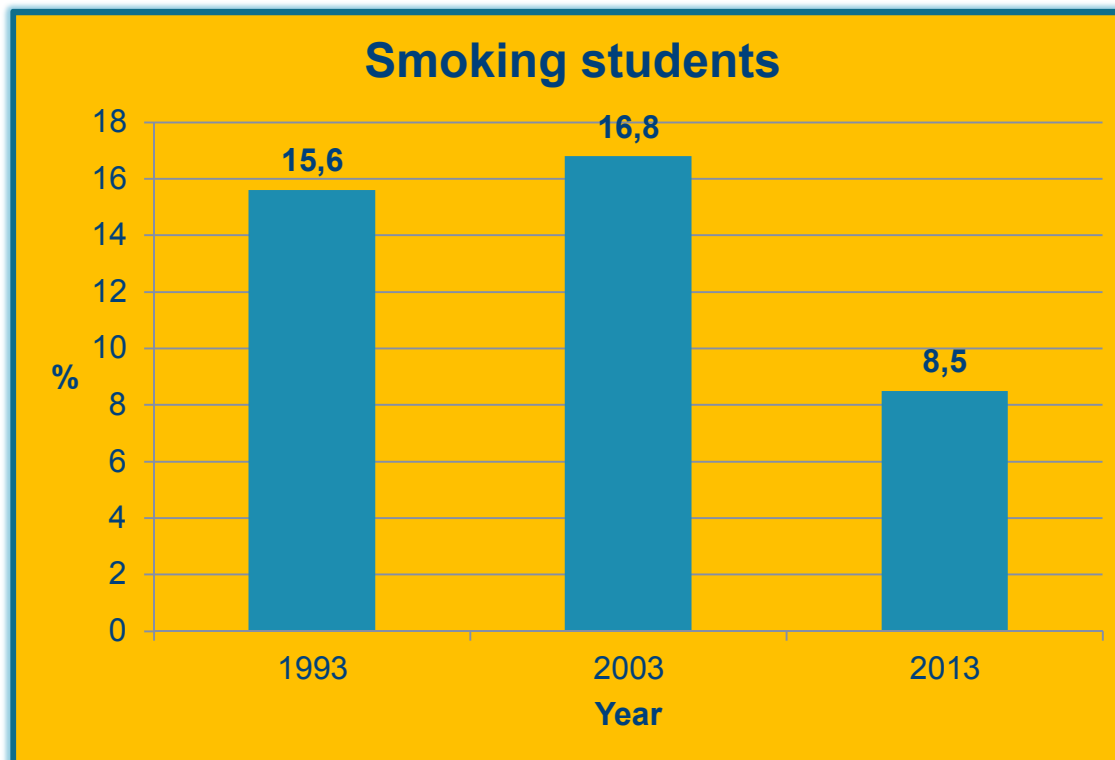
♀ : 46.2%



Smoking tobacco

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

Evolution over years...



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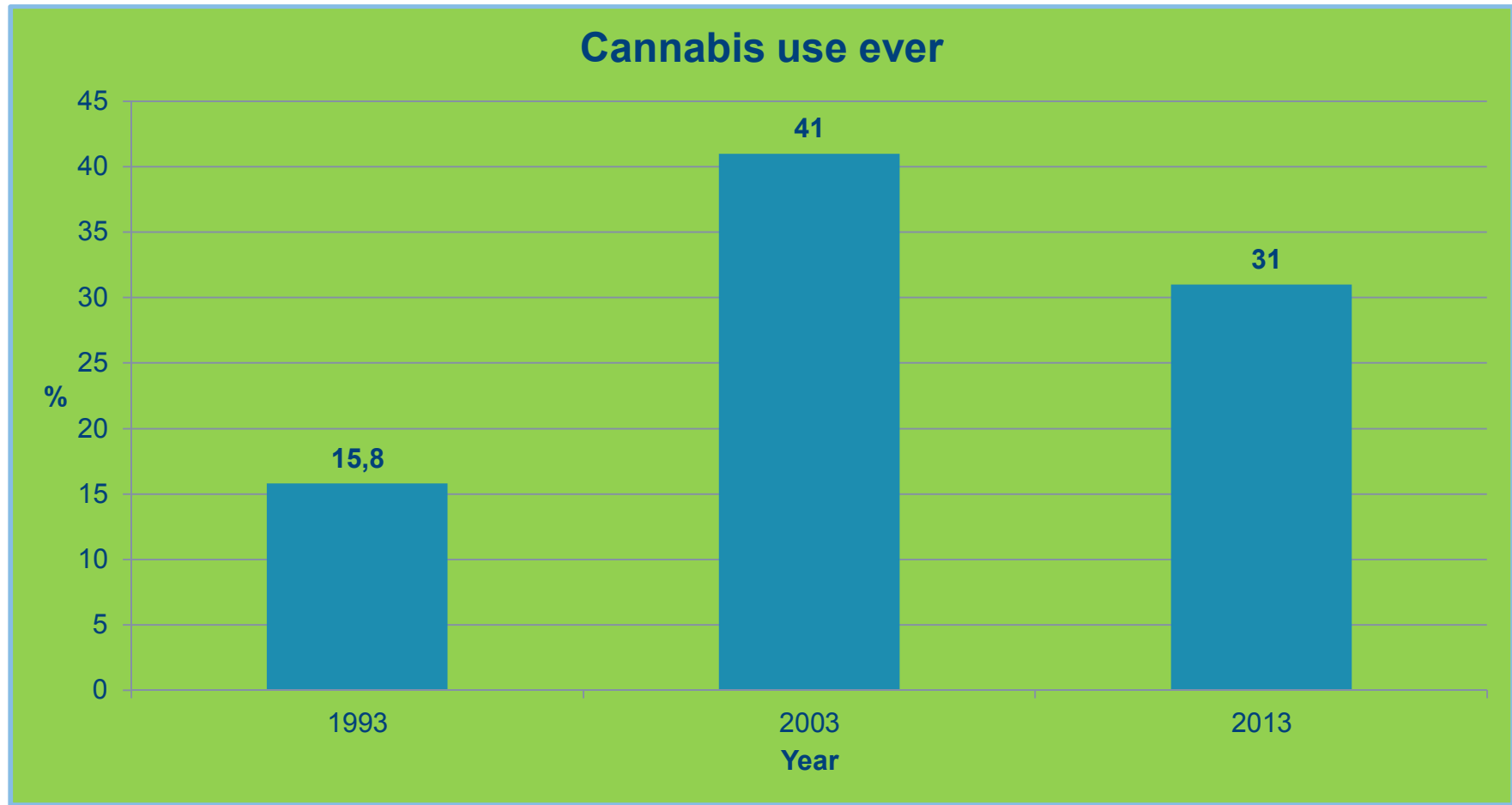
Drugs









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

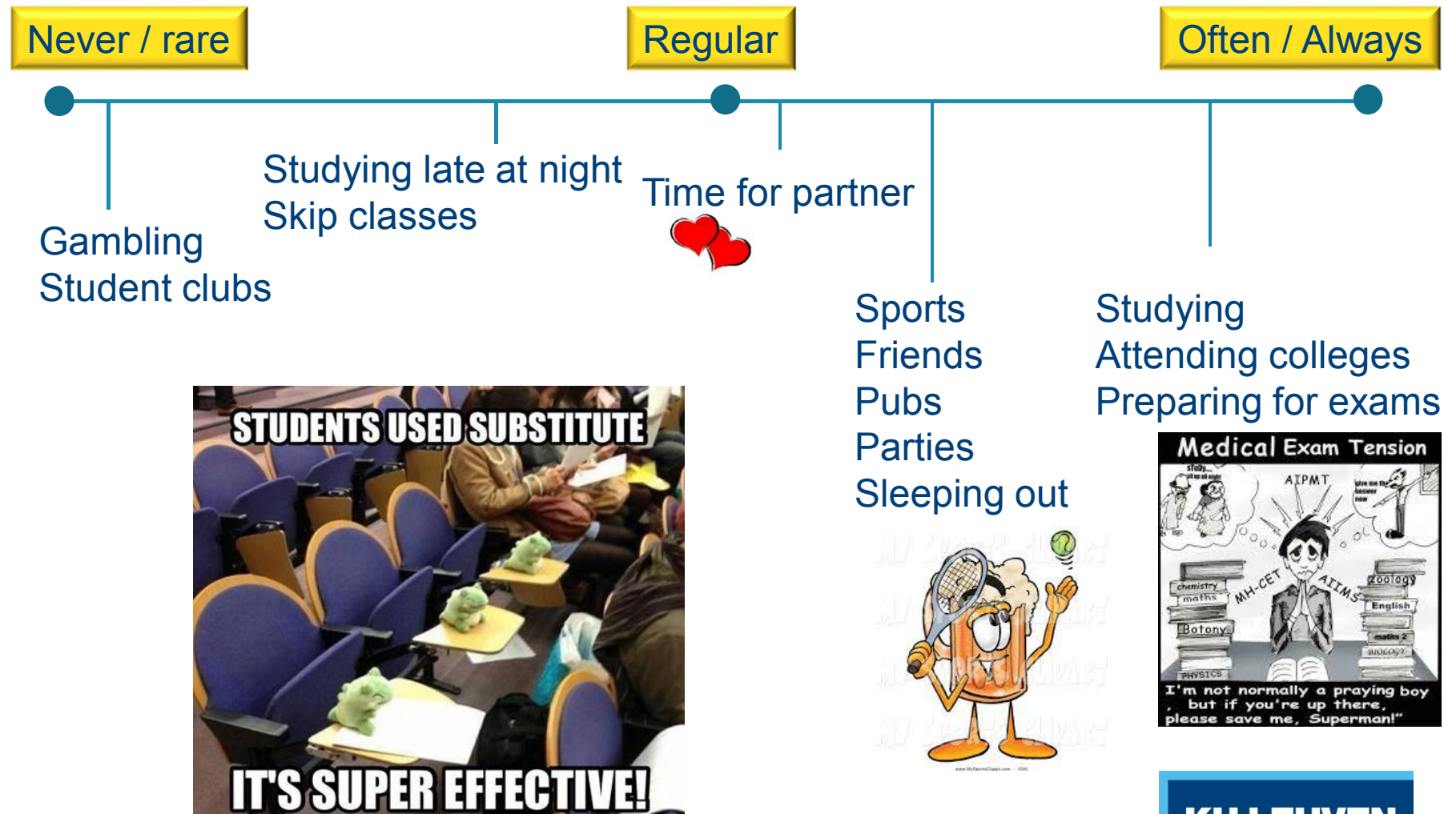
Prevalence	Ever	Last 12 months (of all respondents)
Painkillers	NA	 62.0%  83.9%
Sleeping-/ calming medication	10.5%	 5.2%  8.0%
Stimulating medication	6.2%	 6.0%  3.2%

1 of 2 students
without medical
reason !!



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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.
I feel sad.
I feel sad.
I feel sad.
I 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!



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