

# **An appeal that does not last: French youths' attitude toward e-cigarette. Results from the ARAMIS study (2014-2021)**

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# OFDT MISSIONS

- ◆ The French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction is a non-profit public interest group with a scientific mission. It brings information on drugs and drug addiction to public authorities, professionals working and citizens.
- ◆ The OFDT is the national referee for France within the European Information Network on Drugs and Drug Addiction (REITOX), coordinated by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

## ARAMIS

Attitudes, perceptions, aspirations and motives surrounding the introduction to psychoactive substances

- Fields: Sociological research
- Aims: Explore the perceptions, representations and motives for drug use among minors and young adults (tobacco/alcohol/cannabis)
- Fundings: National Fund for Combatting Addiction

**The authors declare no conflict of interest.**

## ARAMIS 1 (2014-2017): experimentation contexts; representations; use motivations

- **Interviews:** 125 face-to-face interviews (teenagers 13/18 year olds) provided by 9 interviewers
- **Focus group:** 6 collective interviews with 6/12 teenagers
- **Observation:** 150 boys and 70 girls during « prevention debates »

## ARAMIS 2 (2020-2021): consumption control logics; consumptions trajectories

### ➤ 3 thematics surveys:

- **Minors in rural areas** (partnership with National Institute of Youth and Popular Education (Injep)) : 55 teenagers 15/18 year olds, 41 face-to-face interviews, 3 focus group. Researchers : **Yaelle Ansellem-Mainguy, Pauline Blum**
- **Young adults** (partnership with Université ParisCité (UP-LPPS)) : 50 young adults 17/24 year olds. Researchers : **Sasha Matthieu**
- **Parents** (OFDT) : 28 parents of minors aged 15/17. Researchers : **Paul Neybourger**

# Methodology

## Panel - Face to face interviews used for this presentation

### ARAMIS 1 (2014-2017)

	Face-to-face interviews (n=125)	
Gender	Boys	57
	Girls	68
Age	13-14 yo	12
	15-16 yo	50
	<b>17-18 yo</b>	<b>63</b>
School situation	Middle school/junior high school	15
	High school	100
	After high school	1
	Out of school or looking for employment	9
Tobacco use	Lifetime use	94
	Use in last year	59
	Regular use	29
E-cigarette use	<b>Lifetime use</b>	<b>68</b>
	<b>Regular use</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>E-cig experimentation without tobacco experimentation</b>	<b>9</b>

### ARAMIS 2 (2020-2021). Panel focus: young adults

	Face-to-face interviews (n=50)	
Gender	Men	17
	Women	33
Age	17-18 yo	5
	19-20 yo	11
	<b>21-22 yo</b>	<b>20</b>
	23-24 yo	14
School situation / profession	High school/university	39
	Employment	7
	Looking for employment	4
Tobacco use	Lifetime use	41
	Use in last month	13
	Daily use	13
E-cigarette use	<b>Lifetime use</b>	<b>33</b>
	<b>Regular use</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>E-cig experimentation without tobacco experimentation</b>	<b>2</b>

# Main results

## Experimentation

- The first contact with the e-cigarette is not regarded as a meaningful biographical event (≠ Tobacco). No ritualisation like other drugs.

*"I don't remember... I think it was when I was leaving school or something. It was a bit fashionable and so I just had a puff to try". Pierre, 15 yo.*

*"I find it very funny, the smoke is very voluminous and you can smell it more than a real smoke and so I find it very funny to have it in my mouth [...] [about the fruity taste] And to have a bit of fun with a taste that is a bit special [...] but I haven't thought about buying one for that reason". Clotilde, 22 yo.*

- No transgression (also not perceived like drug by parents). E-cig is not a part of identity during the adolescence like other drugs.
- Representation of the tool influence the feeling of the experience. Tanks and mods are complicated, expensive, “adult stuff” (Aramis 1, 2014-2017) when rechargeable e-cig/disposable e-cig are more “funny” (ARAMIS 2 2020-2021)

*"It's better [...] it looks a bit like a USB stick. It's flat, rectangular, and there's no need to charge it. So it's much more practical". Léa, 18 yo.*

# Main results

## Risks perception

Four main categories of risk (all drugs) identified by young people in ARAMIS :

- 1/ Health risks :
  - important with tobacco ; suspicion (or not mentioned) for e-cig (doubt about chemical substances within).  
*"Are there any harmful products in it? Are there not? People never agree. Chloe, 23 yo.*
  - The representation of nicotine addiction is ambivalent. E-cig can promote tobacco quit, but there is no reflection about the risk to become addicted to nicotine or to reinforce addiction with the e-cig.
- 2/ Social risks (social reputation issues): depend on friends, family representation...  
  
*"Then those who have electronic cigarettes, they show off too much, I think...". Anouche, 17 yo.*  
  
*"My boyfriend doesn't mind at all and we have lots of friends who have stopped smoking like that so it's well received". Gaston, 21 yo*
- 3/ "Internal risks" (staggering, getting hurt, causing a road accident, etc.) and 4/ "External risks" (caused by an external person: being attacked, being harassed...) : only concerns alcohol and cannabis

# Main results

## Confusion with other products

- The e-cigarette is often compared to hookah

*"When I saw the others, I saw it as a hookah, so I was not surprised. I wouldn't say I was expecting it, but it didn't surprise me either [...] the taste I think. It's a bit like hookah I think". Anna, 17 yo.*

- The e-cigarette is confused with heated tobacco

*"It's sold in every tobacconist's apparently, it's a sort of small capsule but it looks more like a concentrated cig that makes half a cig or a third of a cig" Etienne, 20 yo.*

- The majority of respondents (except regular users) don't know if e-cig contains nicotine

*[Interviewer]: And when you when you tried the electronic cigarette was it with or without nicotine?*

*[Jean-Michel, 21 yo]: I don't even know. It was with I think.*

*[Interviewer]: And you know a little bit why you tried it?*

*[Jean-Michel, 21 yo]: Because I saw my mates doing it, it made a big smoke, I thought I'd try it, well I quickly coughed... because there was nicotine?*

# Main results

## Trajectories

For young adults who become regular users, 2 items are important:

- Learning how to use the e-cig : with other vapers, in vape-store, on the internet... -> reinforcement of use/positive perceptions

*"The first time I went to buy the liquid and they asked me about nicotine level, they asked me how many cigarettes I smoked a day, I said a pack a day, they asked me the brand too because it can be stronger or weaker. They gave me the nicotine level which corresponded to the number of cigarettes of the brand I smoked [...] I started to think about it". Léa, 18 yo.*

- Managing nicotine addiction: some respondents reduced their tobacco consumption but e-cig use can intensify progressively over time whereas nicotine dosage doesn't necessarily diminish.

*"The thing is that it made me smoke even more, because I was even more on it. Since I could smoke everywhere, I smoked all the time". Line, 19 yo.*



# Main results

## Main results

- Experimentation with e-cigarettes is not regarded as a meaningful biographical event for young people (insistence on flavors, funny experience...).
- There is considerable confusion between all the products that are not cigarettes (e-cigarettes, heated tobacco, hooka, CBD, etc.)
- Becoming a regular e-cig user requires to learn how to use the tool. It only concerns young people who have been smoking for a long time (and who are aware of the management of nicotine dependence).

## Limits

- The e-cigarette was not a survey priority. This dimension emerged gradually and was integrated later.
- It focuses on experimentation context as regard to the age of the panels. Relation between tobacco and e-cig trajectories concerns few people.
- ARAMIS 1 was concluded between 2014 and 2017 (when e-cig were less diffused).  
It would be interesting to investigate new trends like Puff (impact of marketing, representation...)

## In a glimpse

JULY 2022

### Results of the ARAMIS 2 survey on alcohol use at parties among adolescents and young adults

#### Alcohol at parties: social differences and gender stereotypes shape use, risks and regulation strategies

In 2017, the [first survey](#) on Attitudes, perceptions, aspirations and motives surrounding the introduction to psychoactive substances (ARAMIS) was concluded, highlighting the lack of knowledge of health risks and the recurrent ambiguity between prevention messages and alcohol advertising among adolescents and young adults. The French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (OFDT) has published [Tendances no. 149](#) on the results of a second ARAMIS survey which expanded on the [observations made in 2017](#) on the management and control of use at times of heavy drinking such as parties.

The survey, financed by the National Fund for Combatting Addiction, was coordinated by the OFDT with the assistance of the National Institute of Youth and Popular Education (Injep) and the Université Paris-Cité. A total of 133 respondents were interviewed between 2020 and 2021, including teenagers (15-18 years old), young adults (up to and including 23 years old) and parents of minors (15-17 years old).

The results of this survey showed how use was affected by issues of social and gender differentiation. While the long-term health risks associated with alcohol are still largely unknown, the immediate risks are subject to highly codified individual and collective regulations.

#### Parties and alcohol as a reflection of social distinction in adolescence

Parties are a decisive time for socialising in the transition between adolescence and adulthood, reinforcing friendship groups and the social boundaries that distinguish them, particularly between a rural environment that is sometimes not very well off and a more 'bourgeois' urban environment. In this sense, they accentuate the reputation of the group, which is sometimes confused with the economic capital and social image of its members. Nevertheless, facilitated by the high accessibility of alcohol, these variations do not so much concern the quantities and frequency of drinking (which was homogeneous among respondents with different social backgrounds) as the places chosen, the ways of drinking and the products used.

Xavier, 17, testified: *"I think it's really going to be social categories, people who are financially well off who are going to create an image of themselves, they're going to go to parties to say they went [...] Parties, when you're poor, there's no alcohol, there's no drugs [i.e. there are but that's not what matters] ... you just stay there and have a great time, enjoy yourself, joke around. And it's too good."*



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Updates on current research

## Perceptions, motives and trajectories associated with drug use in adolescents

Ivana Obradovic

Before reaching the legal majority age of 18, most French youths have initiated use of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis, and some have already turned into regular users: one in three smokes tobacco every day and one adolescent in ten uses alcohol and/or cannabis at least ten times a month (Spilka et al., 2015). Adolescence is correlated to starting substance use. It may also lead to drug habits, which should be identified in the earliest possible stage (Beck, 2016).

Quantitative surveys finely measure levels of use for psychoactive substance. Yet, they do not take into account the contexts or trajectories of use. Besides the majority of qualitative studies target adult users, often the most problematic (identified through the treatment system), and rarely younger people even though they are involved in a large range of drug use patterns (rare, occasional or regular, recreational or problem use). From this perspective, the ARAMIS study (Attitudes, perceptions, aspirations and motives surrounding the introduction to psychoactive substances) aims to explore the perceptions and motives for drug use among minors, and their trajectories for alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and/or other illicit drug use. This is the reason why the study encompassed a wide range of young people, reporting different types of use, so as to better understand their perception of harm and reasons for use. Assumedly substance use is embedded in an environment and context, and is associated with meaning or needs.

Why do adolescents get into use psychoactive substances? Why do some develop substance use habits while others manage to limit their use? In order to explore these fundamental questions, hardly documented in France aside from rare fragmentary or dated research<sup>1</sup>, a vast interview campaign was carried out between 2014 and 2017 among 200 minors with diverse social profiles, enhanced by direct observations (see methodological reference points). The sample includes the generation born between 1996 and 2002 (aged 13 to barely 18 years at the time of the survey), who grew up in the context of an economic crisis and endemic unemployment. Its distribution reflects social divisions among young people: the strongly interrelated insecurity and relative defiance with regard to the future, which exist alongside the sponta-

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neous valuation of "consumer society" and basic knowledge of the market, movement of goods and unlimited access to information (notably via social networks) (Tiberj, 2017). The analysis should therefore be approached from the perspective of the multiplicity of living contexts, profiles and practices. This issue of *Tendances* offers an initial summary of the results of this undertaking, which opens up numerous lines of reflection, helpful for prevention strategies. The full results will be described in detail in a report due to be published in 2018, which will examine related issues such as the relationship with screen use and the perception of electronic cigarettes.

#### ■ Different contexts of first use

##### A significant biographical event

The interviews<sup>2</sup> showed that the minors who had never used a psychoactive substance were a rarity indicating the high availability of drugs in adolescence (see table on page 7). Biographical accounts routinely associate lifetime use (tobacco, alcohol, cannabis) with three contextual factors: school year (rather than age), place at which use was first introduced (differs somewhat according to the substances) and social circle (a decisive marker in this experience). A fourth factor is often mentioned: the experience of

1. For example: Aquilino, 1998; Beck et al., 2016; Oudinet et al., 2006; AUBRY, 2014; Le Gall, 2002; Bignard-Minquet, 2008. The question relating to motives for use, investigated especially by the OFDT, has been the subject of several exploratory surveys, particularly in the context of the 1990s: [Adolescent Drug Use in France, 1991](#); [Requiem for the Future, 2011](#).

2. Extracts from the largest and most up-to-date interview series on the phenomenon of drug use and age.

