

ESDIP 2022

Encuesta sobre Salud y Consumo de Drogas en Población Interna en Instituciones Penitenciarias

Summary Report

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SUMMARY REPORT

The **Government Delegation for the National Plan on Drugs** of the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Penitentiary Health General Subdirectorate of the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions of the Ministry of the Interior, the General Directorate of Penitentiary Affairs of the Department of Justice, Rights and Memory of the Generalitat of Catalonia and the Directorate of Justice of the Regional Ministry of Equality, Justice and Social Affairs through the Prison Analysis and Inspection Program of the Basque Government, carries out a survey on Health and Drug Consumption among the Inmate Population in Penitentiary Institutions (ESDIP) every five years (editions in 2006-2011-2016-2022).

ESDIP is framed within the lines of work of the European and Spanish Strategies on Drugs and Addictions, being a useful tool for obtaining information on health and drug use in the prison population. This survey is included in the **National Statistical Plan** of the National Institute of Statistics (INE) and the data obtained serves as a reference on a national and international level.

ESDIP Objective: To obtain data on socio-demographic characteristics, health, drug use, risk practices and treatment for drug use in the prison population in Spain, in order to have useful information to develop and evaluate, based on knowledge, programs and interventions aimed at preventing and reducing drug use and associated problems in this population.

ESDIP method: Survey of the prison population deprived of liberty (men and women over 18 years of age) in prisons in Spain. A face-to-face personal interview is carried out through a digitalized, anonymous and pre-coded questionnaire (available in Spanish and Arabic), which is completed by the interviewer and lasts 30-45 minutes. In 2022, 5,512 inmates were interviewed. The results obtained are nationally representative. The results come from the responses of the prison population, which must be taken into account when interpreting them. The interpretation of the historical data should always be carried out with caution.

The **socio-demographic profile of the male inmates** is that of a 40-year-old Spanish male who left school at the end of secondary school or before. During the 12 months prior to this admission, he was working and mostly lived in stable accommodation with his own family. Nine per cent lived in unstable accommodation. The **socio-demographic profile of the female inmates** is that of a 41 year old Spanish woman, who left school at the end of secondary school or before. During the 12 months prior to this admission, she was unemployed looking for work or not active and mostly lived in stable accommodation with children. Remarkably, 15.3% were living in unstable accommodation prior to their current entry.

Perception of health status. The majority of the prison population consider their state of health to be good or very good. 20.7% consider that their health is better when they are in prison, which is higher than in 2016 (15.1% in 2016).

Mental health. 34.8% of the prison population reported having been diagnosed, at some time in their lives, with a mental or emotional disorder, the prevalence being higher among women (42.3%) than among men (34.3%). 32.2% of the prison population reported having had suicidal thoughts at some time in their lives (38.7% in women and 31.8% in men). These suicidal thoughts are higher in prison than at liberty in both sexes. 19.9% of the prison population acknowledges that they have attempted to take their own life at some time (25.4% in women and 19.5% in men). This figure rises to 61.7% of the prison population who have had suicidal thoughts.

Infectious diseases. Between 65% and 73% of the prison population, remember having been tested for HIV or hepatitis. Among the prison population who remember having been tested and know the result, 4.6% are HIV positive, 13.6% are hepatitis C positive and 1.1% are hepatitis B positive. The prevalence of infection is clearly higher in men and among injectors. Since 2011 there has been a decrease in the prevalence of infectious diseases in both the total inmate population and injectors. The incidence of SARS-COV-2 (COVID) in the prison population shows that 22.6% of the prison population have tested positive for the virus at some time (34.6% in prisons in Catalonia and 20.5% in prisons run by the National Government).

Prevalence of drug use. Comparison between the general population (EDADES, 2022) and the prison population (ESDIP 2022) while at liberty. The reported use of all illegal drugs in the last 12 months is clearly higher in the prison population deprived of liberty prior to their admission than in the general population aged 15 to 64 years, with differences in the use of cannabis and cocaine standing out. The prison population starts using drugs at an earlier age than the general population aged 15 to 64.

Prevalence of drug use. Use of legal and illegal drugs in the prison population. 75.1% of the prison population reported having consumed an illegal drug at some time in their life at liberty, 58.9% in the last year at liberty, 53.5% in the last month at liberty and 16.8% in the last 30 days in prison. Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug both in prison and at liberty. Tobacco is the most commonly used legal substance both in and at liberty. The prevalence of both legal and illegal drug use both in prison and at liberty is higher among men.

Prevalence of drug use. Comparison of the prison population at liberty and in prison. On entering prison, the prevalence of drug use decreases for all drugs, the most striking decrease being in the use of alcohol and cocaine. Women show a greater reduction in the prevalence of use of all drugs on entering prison, except in the case of tobacco, which, like men, increases its use in prison. From 2006 to 2022, there is a downward trend in the prevalence of use in prison in the last 30 days for most illicit drugs. Cannabis, which is the most commonly used illicit drug in prison, shows a clear downward trend, with its use falling to a third of what it was in 2006. The only substance showing an upward trend in prevalence of use is non-prescribed tranquillizers since 2011, although the values reached in 2022 are lower than those observed in 2006 (the peak of the historical series).

Non-fatal drug overdoses in the prison population. Non-fatal overdoses among the prison population are more frequent while at liberty (18.9% for the total, 19.0% for men and 17.0% for women) than inside the prison (4.1% for the total, 4.2% for men and 2.7% for women) and, when they occur while at liberty, they are more frequent before the first admission.

Drug injection. In 2022, 15.3% of the prison population had injected drugs at some time in their lives, a value that has remained stable over the last 10 years. The same trend is observed for drug injection in the last 30 days at liberty. Drug injection in the last 30 days in prison decreases in comparison to drug injection at liberty, and remains

stable over the whole historical series with values close to 1.3%. 1.1% of the total prison population reported having injected for the first time in prison.

Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) in Prisons. 21.2% of the prison population are aware of the existence of the Prison Syringe Exchange Program (21.7% in men and 13.6% in women), a figure that rises to 52.8% of the prison population who have injected at some point in their lives. Awareness of these programs is also higher among men who have injected drugs than among women who have injected drugs (53.9% men and 34.6% women). 1.1% of the total prison population has used SEP in the last month in prison.

Unprotected sexual practices. 53.3% of the prison population stated that they had had sexual intercourses in the last 12 months, the percentage being higher among women (57.3%) than among men (53%). 38.8% of the prison population who have had sexual relations in the last 12 months have used prophylactic and most of them (95.2%) have used male condoms. It is remarkable to note the high percentage of the prison population who, knowing their positive serological status for different infectious diseases, do not use prophylactic despite the fact that most of the prison population are aware of the possibility of obtaining them free of charge together with lubricant in their prison (96.4%). A similar value in both sexes and stable since 2016.

Tattoos. In 2022, 52.6% of the prison population declares to have had a tattoo outside prison at some time in their lives, a value that decreases to 28.0% inside prison, 28.4% of men and 21.2% of women. 18.6% of the prison population reported having had a tattoo in prison during their current imprisonment. The percentage of the total prison population that has ever had a tattoo in prison has increased since 2016, especially among women.

Knowledge of risk factors. Although the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C through unprotected sex and sharing used syringes is well known among the prison population, there is a certain lack of knowledge about other transmission mechanisms, especially in the case of hepatitis C. It is necessary to continue educating and budgeting for specific programs on risk factors and to raise awareness among the prison population on the need to use prophylactic, and among injecting drug users on the possibility and benefit of using the sterile syringes provided in the centers thanks to the SEP.

Treatment for drug use. 31.2% of the prison population acknowledges that they have received treatment at liberty at some point in their lives to stop or control their drug use (31.5% men and 26.1% women). 24.1% reported having received treatment in prison at some time during any admission (24.6% men and 17.1% women). 50.6% of the prison population (50.3% men and 56.2% women) who were in treatment at liberty reported having continued to receive treatment on entering prison. Those who interrupted their treatment during their stay in prison, mostly took voluntary leave (45.6%) or medical discharge (28.6%). 20.8% of the prison population reported having received treatment to stop or control drug use at the time of current admission (21.1% men, 15.5% women).

Preventive and treatment measures should continue to be targeted to the characteristics and profile of this at-risk population, which requires a multidisciplinary approach and the coordination of the different agents and institutions involved. The stay in prison is an opportunity to improve the health of the prison population and to carry out prevention and treatment programs. Efforts should continue to be made to reduce drug use and the associated risks and problems.

Having this information available, in a regular and updated manner, is very useful for budgeting, developing and evaluating therapeutic interventions, which will benefit the prison population, their families and the population in general.

For more information, please consult the full report of the ESDIP 2022 survey:

https://pnsd.sanidad.gob.es/profesionales/sistemasInformacion/sistemaInformacion/encuestas_ESDIP.htm