

GENERAL-DIRECTORATE FOR INTERVENTION ON ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOURS AND  
DEPENDENCIES

# Cannabis High-Risk Use Estimation

**Portugal/2012**

**Executive Summary**

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High-risk drug use is one of the five key-indicators of the EMCDDA for the drug phenomenon monitoring in Europe. This kind of indicator is an important tool for the evaluation of the use trends, as well as for the identification of the needs in terms of special answers.

In the context of high risk drug use, frequent and high-risk use of cannabis, along with opiate high risk use and intravenous use a type of use which prevalence should, most importantly, be estimated.

Taking into account the cannabis use prevalence in the general population, it is considered that cannabis high-risk use prevalence is adequately estimated through the general population surveys.

Regarding the last representative survey, implemented in 2012, it is possible to state that cannabis high-risk prevalence in Portugal is 0.6% for the population of 15-74 years old, and 0.7% of 15-64 years old.

This is the same prevalence obtained for moderate/high-risk use (according to the Cannabis Abuse Screening Test) and for cannabis dependence (according to the Severity of Dependence Scale). However, only a part of high-risk users identifies problems associated with this use, and almost none, during life and because of it, sought specialized help.

Compared with the general population, the high risk users sample comprises younger individuals, although older than the cannabis users in general. Three quarters either working or studying. Along with cannabis, they use mainly alcoholic drinks and tobacco. Although their use of other illicit substances is higher than the general population, they tend to be circumscribed to younger age groups and male individuals.

In a sample of high-risk users in treatment in 2012, it is noted that they present lower levels of education and an unemployment rate higher the sample of high risk cannabis users among the general population. Illicit substances uses prevalence is neatly higher regardless of age or sex, but more frequent.

In later studies, it is suggested the estimation of this high-risk use prevalence also through indirect methods, as well as the other surveys on the general population, that allow data from high-risk cannabis users and more stigmatized uses.