

# BEHIND THE HIGH

## THE INTERSECTION OF DRUG USE AND HEALTH

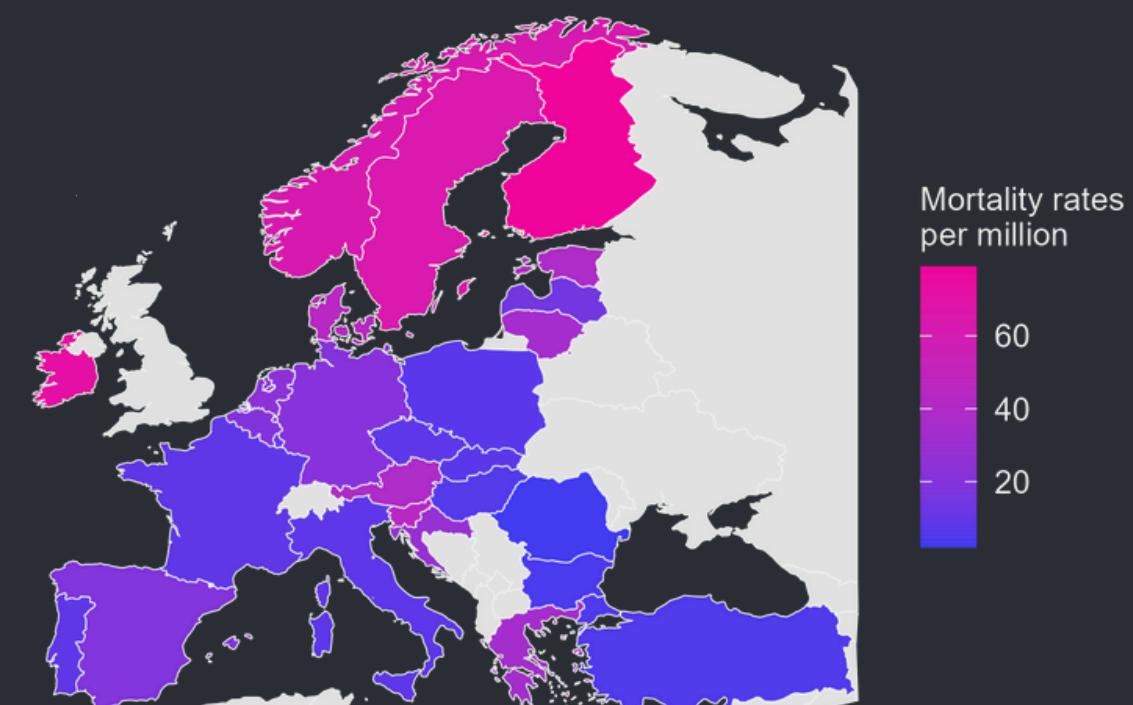
Substance abuse has been a growing public health concern in recent years - but who exactly does it affect the most, and how does it impact individual people?

### MAPPING THE CRISIS: DRUG ABUSE MORTALITY RATES IN EUROPE

Every year in Europe around 22.5 people out of every million citizens die through causes related to drug abuse, with extremely concerning drug-induced mortality rates particularly visible in northern part of the continent.

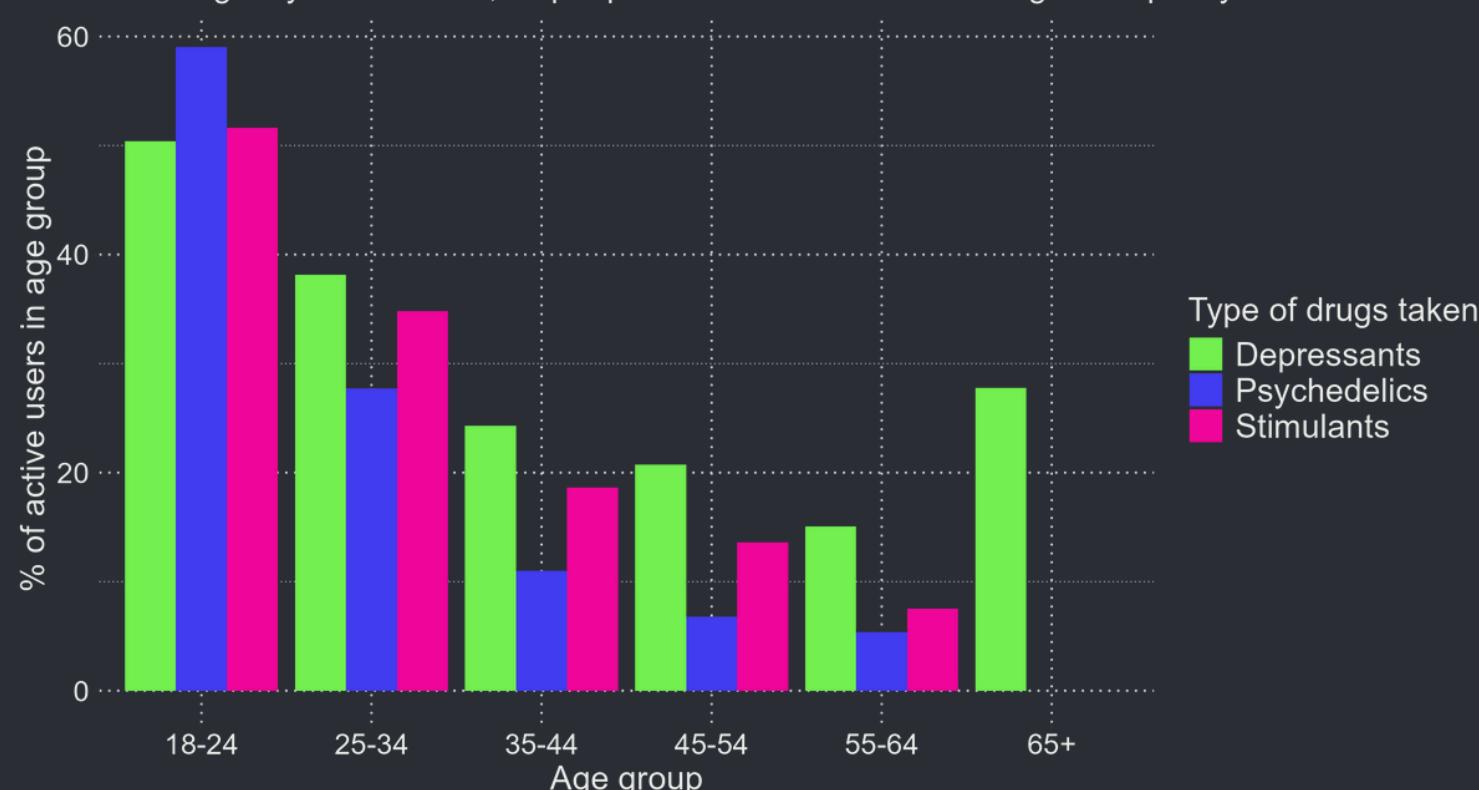
- This trend may be linked to the disparities in sunlight hours between Scandinavia and other European countries\*, and is especially concerning given the region's high standard of living\* and reputation for happiness\*.
- Such surprising disconnect between overall well-being and drug abuse rates, indicates that the issue stems from causes more complex than mere unhappiness or lack of fulfillment in life.

Drug-induced mortality rates per million among adults



### Illicit drug use by drug type and age group

Including only active users, i.e. people who have taken such drug in the past year



### THE OVERLOOKED ISSUE: LEGAL DRUGS USE AND GENDER DISPARITIES

Illicit drugs are only part of the picture - an even more prevalent issue is the use of drugs considered legal, yet still harmful to the health of all active users.

- The chart highlights some gender disparities: a significantly bigger proportion of men tend to regularly use drugs, a trend that's most visible when considering the psychoactive substances that are illegal (or only available through prescription medicines) in most countries; this finding is also supported by research pointing to overall higher addiction rates among men\*.
- Surprisingly, the only drug with a bigger proportion of female active users is alcohol.

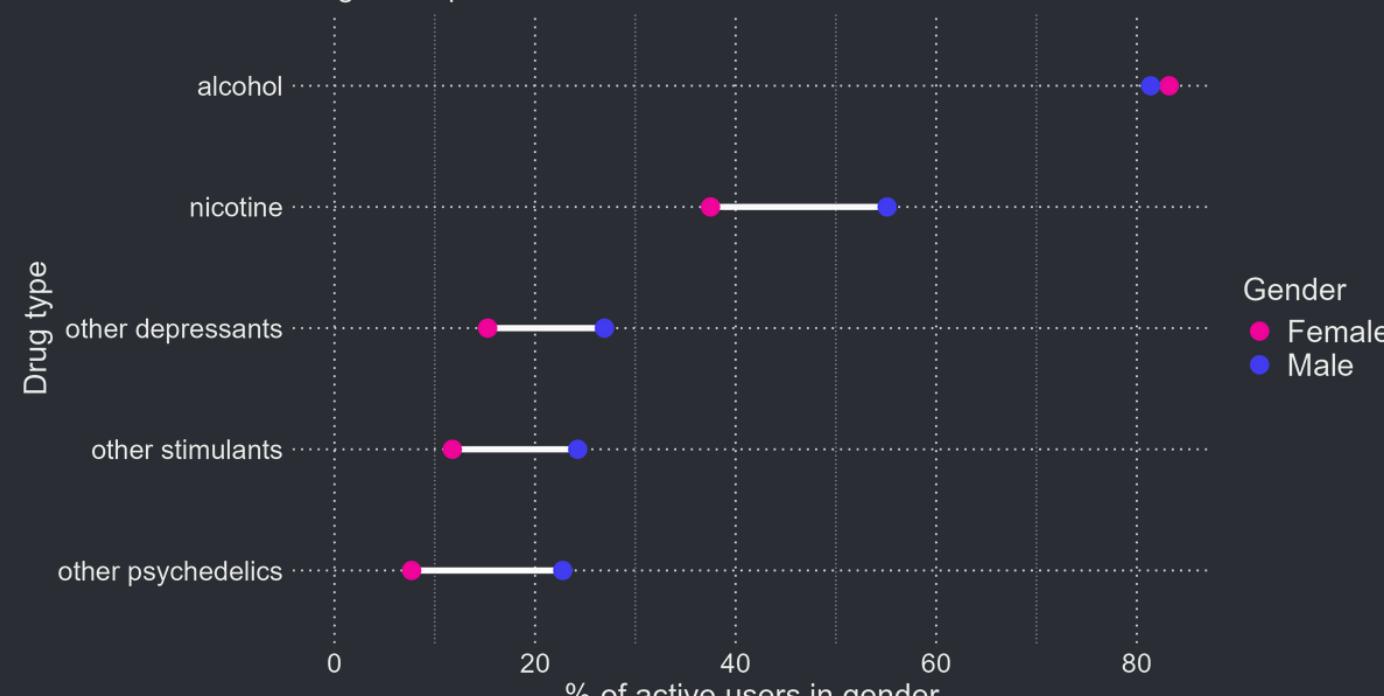
### AGE MATTERS: DECODING DRUG USE PATTERNS

This chart highlights a clear trend: drug usage is more closely linked to age than to the type of drug used.

- Unsurprisingly, younger age groups show higher overall drug use, with a particularly strong preference for psychedelics - often associated with party culture.
- Depressant use is notably high among older adults, likely influenced by prescription drugs including opioids and benzodiazepines.
- These patterns suggest that drug abuse is a nuanced issue, with distinct age-related factors influencing drug choice - recognizing these age-specific trends is essential for designing effective, targeted prevention strategies.

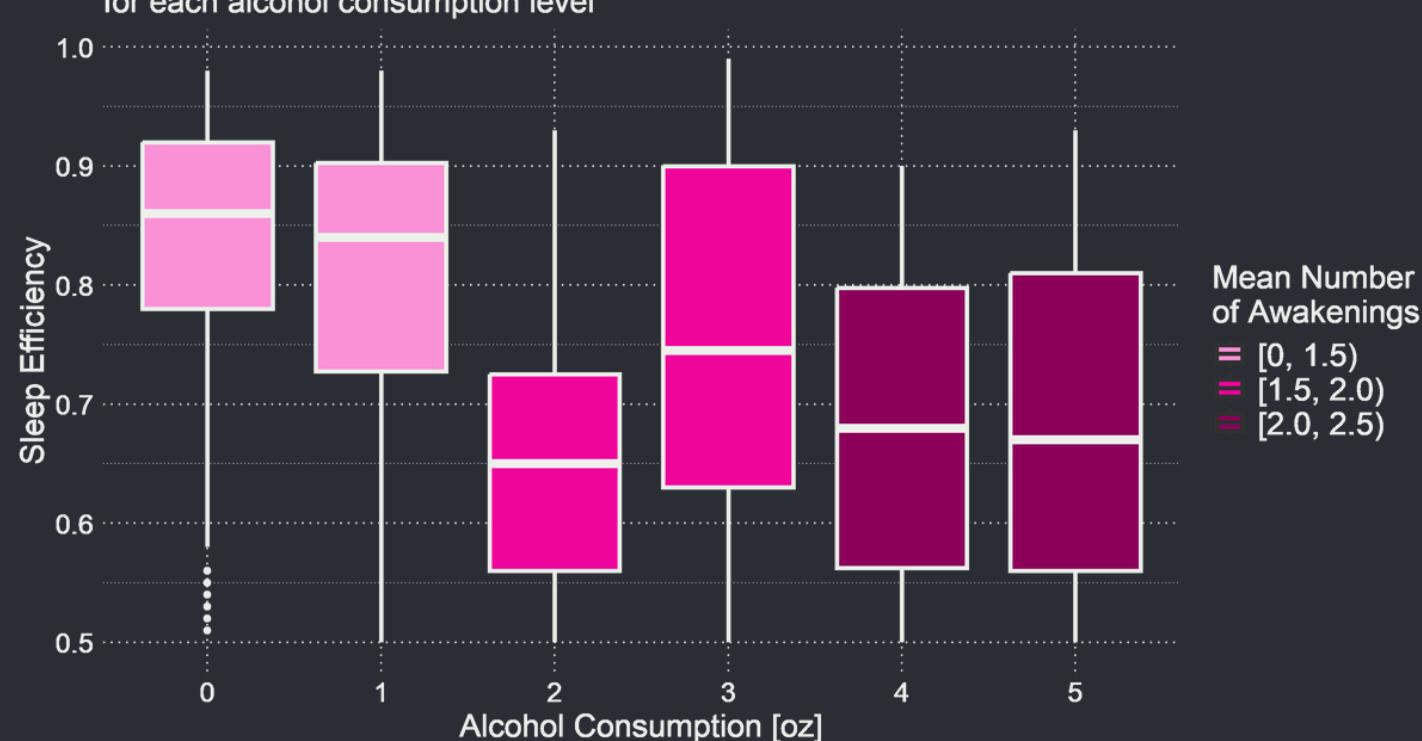
### Drug use by drug type and gender

Including only active users, i.e. people who have taken such drug in the past month



### Sleep Efficiency by Alcohol Consumption

Boxplots colored by mean number of awakenings for each alcohol consumption level



### UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT: ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND SLEEP QUALITY

As mentioned before, even legally available substances aren't necessarily harmless. One of the metrics that can measure this is sleep efficiency, i.e. a measure of the proportion of time in bed spent asleep.

- The data shows that heavy drinkers are way less likely to get a good night's sleep after consuming alcohol - their rest is likely to be less efficient and interrupted by more awakenings.
- Such findings imply that even the most socially acceptable drugs can have a shattering effect on users' health\*.

