

# In a glimpse

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

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### 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."*

### A representation of risk focused on the immediate consequences of use

Individual or collective strategies for managing the effects of alcohol vary around three main categories of risk identified by young people:

- Social risks (social reputation issues);
- “Internal risks” (staggering, getting hurt, causing a road accident, etc.);
- “External risks” caused by an external person (being attacked, accosted, etc.).

These three categories are based on a representation of risk centred on the immediate consequences of use, such as regulating alcohol intake to “keep face” by implementing strategies (alternating alcohol use with water, getting some fresh air, eating “a good plate of pasta to line your stomach” before the party, etc.). In response to the [first edition of the ARAMIS survey](#), the second edition showed that the long-term health risks incurred were rarely integrated or even totally absent in the use guidelines mentioned by young people at parties.

### Dealing with the effects of alcohol is individual, collective, and highly gendered

Control strategies are particularly pronounced among girls, who must conform to social expectations defined by the gender order, which is all the more apparent in drunken contexts that favour letting go. Exposed to the risk of being seen as “easy” or “immature”, they are subject to contradictory imperatives from boys who judge them and encourage them to drink at the same time. Faced with the risk of abuse and a damaged social image, they are introducing control strategies both before the context of use and when they return from the evening, particularly if they have to walk home in public at night or use public transport alone.

These regulation strategies are developed collectively as young people act in solidarity and share out different roles: stocking up on alcohol, serving it, looking after the others, being a designated driver [i.e. someone who drives and does not drink], taking on the role of a ‘mother’ or ‘bodyguard’. Martine, 21 years old, testified: *“I’m really protective, I’m a bit of a party mum [...] If I’m with people who drink more, I’ll obviously drink less so that I can be more careful and look after them.”*

The results of ARAMIS 2 also addressed the issue of organised loss of control, in line with individual and collective regulation strategies. For example, in the case of heavy episodic drinking, young people are aware of the risks associated with loss of control and the difficulties of overcoming these dangers alone. The group therefore plays a role as a safeguard against individual excesses by reasoning with excessive drinkers, developing collective strategies to stop their use and even excluding them from the group.

The ARAMIS 2 survey also illustrated the effects of public road safety policies on the integration of the “Sam”<sup>1</sup> figure and, conversely, the great ease with which minors managed to obtain alcohol. These results call for further information to be provided to young people and their parents on the long-term health consequences, which are still underestimated and even largely unknown.

### Further reading (in French)

Tendances n°149, [Alcool et soirées chez les adolescents et jeunes majeurs](#), 8 p.

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<sup>1</sup> In France the designated driver is called “Sam”. Sam is the one who drives and does not drink.