A blurred, low-angle photograph of a crowd of people walking on a shiny floor, likely in a public space like a mall or airport. The image is heavily blurred, showing only the lower legs and feet of the individuals. The color palette is dominated by cool tones, with a strong blue/cyan tint across the entire scene.

# **Transcrime Research in Brief**

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December 2015

## **04. Risky Behaviours**

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## Risky Behaviours

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# Introduction

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- This study presents data on the prevalence of the following risky behaviours: tobacco and alcohol consumption, drug use and gambling.
- The data were collected through a CAWI survey among high school, technical institute and vocational training centre students (15-19 years old).
- The survey was carried out in April/May 2014 in 12 schools located in the Trentino Province (Northern Italy).
- The study analysed risky behaviours in relation to gender, age, citizenship, academic achievement and type of school attended.
- The findings are based on 1,200 questionnaires representative of the students in the province (21,465).
- The activity, coordinated by Transcrime, was supported by the Autonomous Province of Trento under the project *Monitoring and preventing pathological gambling in Trentino* (Caneppele and Marchiaro 2015).

## Box 1 Socio-demographic characteristics

21,465 Students (2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th year in high schools, technical institutes and 2nd, 3rd and 4th year in vocational training centres). 49.6% male and 50.4% female. 10.9% of students has foreign nationality.

43.1% of students attend high schools, 36.1% technical schools, 20.8% vocational training centres. Males mainly attend technical schools (45.1%), while females mainly high schools (56.1%). Most foreign students are enrolled in technical schools (51.4%) or vocational training centres (28%).

# 1. Risky behaviours

## 1.1. Tobacco consumption

- Tobacco consumption is a behaviour that, usually, has a daily regularity. Indeed 23.9% of young people smoke on daily basis. While 47.1% say they do not smoke or have only tried once (Fig. 1).
- Based on the results of the survey, the percentage of students in the province (aged 15-19) who say they smoke tobacco every day is higher (at least 4 percentage points) than the national average. In Italy, in 2014, the percentage of young people aged between 15 and 24 who declared smoking regularly was, in fact, less than 20% (19.7%) (OSSFAD 2015).

Smoking habits do not vary by gender but vary by age. Among older students, the share of daily smokers touches 34.9% (19 years old or older), while the share of younger students is 10.5% (16-year-olds group). Daily smokers among students with foreign nationality are less than Italians (19.1% vs 24.5%).

It is worth remarking the negative relationship between smoking and academic performance. (Tab. 1). When the academic performance decreases, the percentage of teens who say they smoke every day increases linearly and viceversa.

In addition, differences emerge considering the school type (Fig. 2). Vocational training centre students smoke regularly (39.1%) much more often than their peers at high schools (17.8%) and technical institutes (22.6%).

Fig. 1 Frequency of tobacco consumption

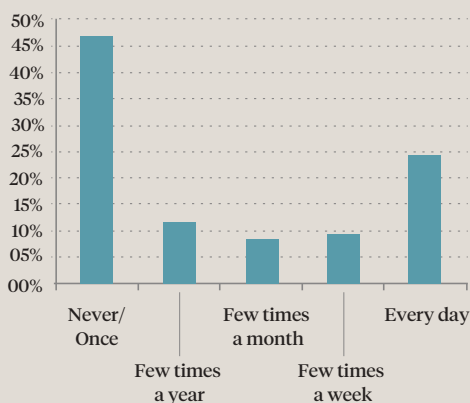
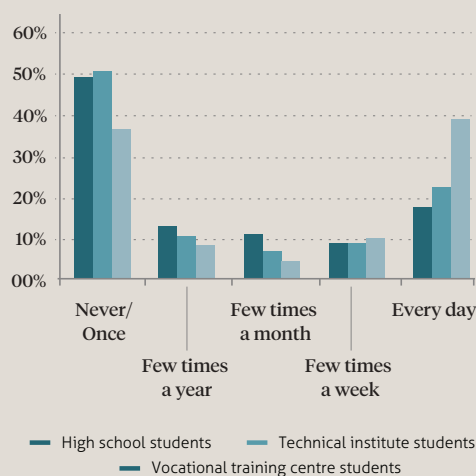


Fig. 2 Tobacco consumption by school type



Tab. 1 Tobacco consumption in relation to the average academic performance. Percentage by row

	Never	Few times per year	Few times per month	Few times a week	Every day
From 8 up	64.9%	12.9%	4.9%	5.0%	12.3%
Around 7	50.9%	12.1%	9.4%	7.0%	20.5%
Around 6	35.1%	10.6%	9.0%	14.3%	31.1%
Around 5	21.7%	4.5%	0.0%	17.4%	56.4%
4 or less	15.8%	0.0%	13.1%	13.1%	57.9%

## 1.2. Alcohol consumption

As regards the consumption of alcohol, almost 70% of students declare to drink alcohol. Most of them claim a moderate consumption (45.2%), although this does not exclude occasional intoxications (Fig. 3). However, 23.2% of young people says they get drunk often. The share of those who claim not to drink at all is 31.5%.

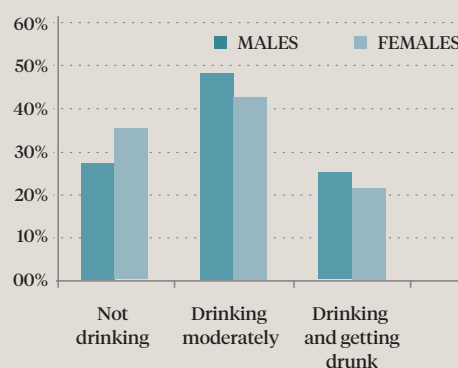
The trend on alcohol consumption in Trentino mirrors the national trend, showing a slight decline in the last decade (ISTAT 2015; OSSFAD 2015; IFC and CNR 2012; Osservatorio per la Salute P.A.T. – PASSI 2014). However, alcohol consumption remains among the highest in Italy. The figures for drunkenness, especially for *binge drinking*, are growing, and they put the province well above the national average for the year 2014 (ISTAT 2015).

The share of students who declared having being drunk in the last three months (48%) triples the national average (Fig. 5). This finding highlights the need to evaluate carefully the effectiveness of the prevention strategies so far implemented in the province.

Boys tend to drink alcohol more than girls. It is possible to identify a clear increase in consumption, excessive or not, with age (Tab. 2).

As experienced with tobacco consumption, foreign students tend to have more controlled behaviours. 12.6% say they usually drink excessively (vs 24.6% of Italian students). Moreover, a significant share of students claim not to drink at all (42.9% against 30.1% of Italians). Even alcohol consumption is negatively associated to the academic performance. The student group with better performances declares to drink much less than the group with the lowest academic performances. In the first group, 42.4% does not drink (vs 23.8% of the second one) and 19% drinks excessively (vs 44.3% of the second one) (Fig. 4).

Fig. 3 Alcohol consumption by gender



Tab. 2 Alcohol consumption by age. Percentage by row

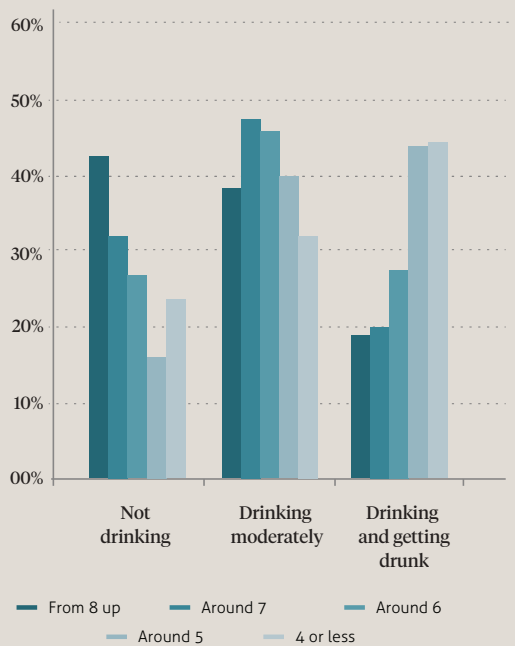
	Not drinking	Drinking moderately	Drinking and getting drunk
16 years old and younger	54.0%	30.7%	15.4%
17 years old	33.7%	46.6%	19.7%
18 years old	24.0%	48.7%	27.3%
19 years old and older	20.4%	51.5%	28.2%

Also for alcohol there are some differences by school type with a higher prevalence in students from vocational training centres. 27.3% say they usually drink until they are drunk (vs 23.2% of high school and 20.9% of technical institutes students).

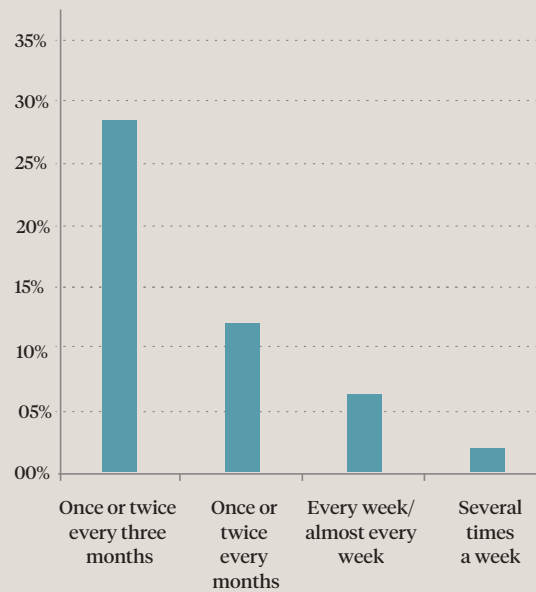
When we consider the times students got drunk in the last 3 months, the percentage reaches 48.9% (Fig. 5).<sup>2</sup> This piece of

information seems contradictory compared to the number of students who answered that they drink moderately and rarely get drunk (more than half) (Tab. 3).<sup>3</sup> Instead, the combination of the two responses reveals familiarity with alcoholic beverages and underestimation of the risks associated with excessive consumption (get drunk once or twice every three months), which is "normalized".

**Fig. 4 Alcohol consumption. Compared to average school**



**Fig. 5 Frequency of getting drunk in the last 3 months**



**Tab. 3 Alcohol consumption and drinking patterns. Percentage by row**

Over the last 3 months, how many times have you drunk?					
Do you drink alcohol?	Never	Once or twice in the last three months	Once or twice a month	Every week or so	Several times a week
I do not drink	94.9%	5.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Drink in a moderate	44.7%	45.5%	7.8%	1.8%	0.2%
I drink and get drunk	4.6%	27.6%	36.9%	23.6%	7.2%

Finally, the use and abuse of alcohol are strongly and positively correlated with tobacco smoking. Among those who

smoke daily, over 80% had been drunk at least once in the last three months, while among non-smokers this percentage is around 20%.

2. For ease of reading, it excluded the category of those who asserted that they had never drunk in the last three months, corresponding to 51.1% of the total.

3. It should be noted that the relations between answers given by the students to this question and main socio-demographic variables considered here (gender, age, citizenship, academic achievement, type of school attended) are the same as those for alcohol consumption.

### 1.3. Drug use

Two more questions aimed to understand the students' proximity with the world of drugs, in particular if they ever smoked marijuana or hashish and if they ever used other drugs (ecstasy, hallucinogens, etc.).

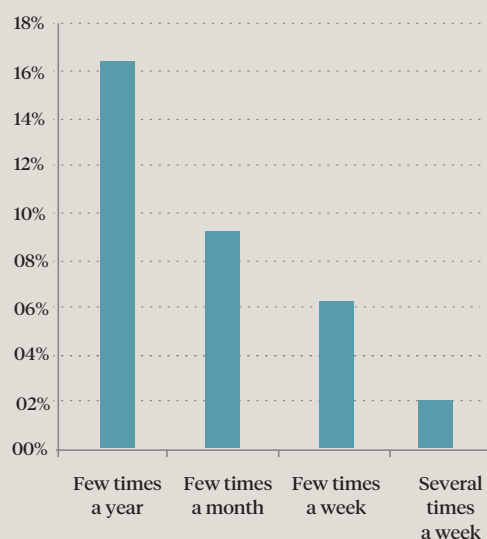
66.1% of the students said they had never smoked marijuana or hashish (cannabis), or that they did it only once. Among those who declared smoking more than once, 16.3% said they do it few times a year. There are also cases of students who smoke a few times a month (9.2%), some once a week (6, 3%) and others daily (2.1%) (Fig. 6).

The percentage of young people who claim having used cannabis (33.9%) is significantly higher than the national average reported in the same age group (27.26%) (SPS-DPA 2015). Regular cannabis use (several times a month) involves 17.6% of students surveyed.

Almost all of the students say they never made use of substances other than cannabis or they had only tried once (96.3%). Those who used them say they do it few times a year (2.4%). There are some rare cases of students using drugs a few times a month (0.3%), some once a week (0.5%) and others daily (0.5%).

Despite the reduced rates, it is a phenomenon to be monitored, also in view of the strong correlation with smoking marijuana or hashish with drinking habits.

**Fig. 6 Frequency of marijuana or hashish consumption**

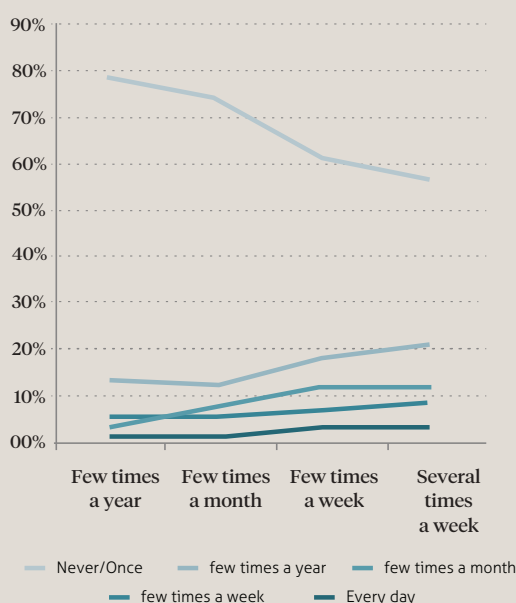


Smoking hashish or marijuana is more common among boys. 17% smokes some times a year, 10.9% a few times a month, 8.3% a few times a week and 3.5% every day or almost. Girls smoke less. Totally, smoking hashish or marijuana concerned less than 30% of the student population.

As for tobacco and alcohol, the consumption of hashish and marijuana increases with age. As the age increases, the rate of those who say they have never smoked or had done so only once (from 77.9% to 56.1%) decreases, and those who smoke a few times a year (from 12.9% to 20.4%), once a month (from 3.3% to 12.4%), once a week (from 4.9% to 8.1%) or everyday (from 1.1% to 3%) increase (Fig. 7).

There is no linear relationship between marijuana or hashish consumption and academic performance. However, while 81.9% of smarter students assert that they never use it, the percentage drops to 42.4% of students with the lowest marks. It is important to highlight the correlation, strong and positive, that emerges among hashish or marijuana consumption in relation to tobacco use and in association with the use and abuse of alcohol. This finding is not surprising since it is well established that in adolescence transgressive behaviours tend to manifest together.

**Fig. 7 Frequency of marijuana or hashish consumption by age**



4. For ease of reading the chart did not include the category of those who asserted that they had never smoked, "reeds" (66.1%).



## 1.4. Gambling<sup>5</sup>

18% of students gambled in the last three months, mainly spending money in offline games such as instant lottery, sports betting and card games.

Among those who said they gambled in the past three months, 56.9% show no risk of gambling addiction while 11.7% show a moderate risk and 1.9% a high risk.

Although it is not a matter to be underestimated, this result allows to scale down some alarmism that characterized the public debate on the subject. In fact, it shows that the percentage of possible pathological gamblers is less than 2% in Trentino whereas in Italy, for the same age group, the percentage of pathological gamblers is almost double (3.7 %) (SPS-DPA 2015).

Boys, compared to girls, fall more often in the problematic gamblers group (Fig. 8).

With respect to age, there were no significant differences, while a relationship - albeit not particularly strong - emerges between citizenship and

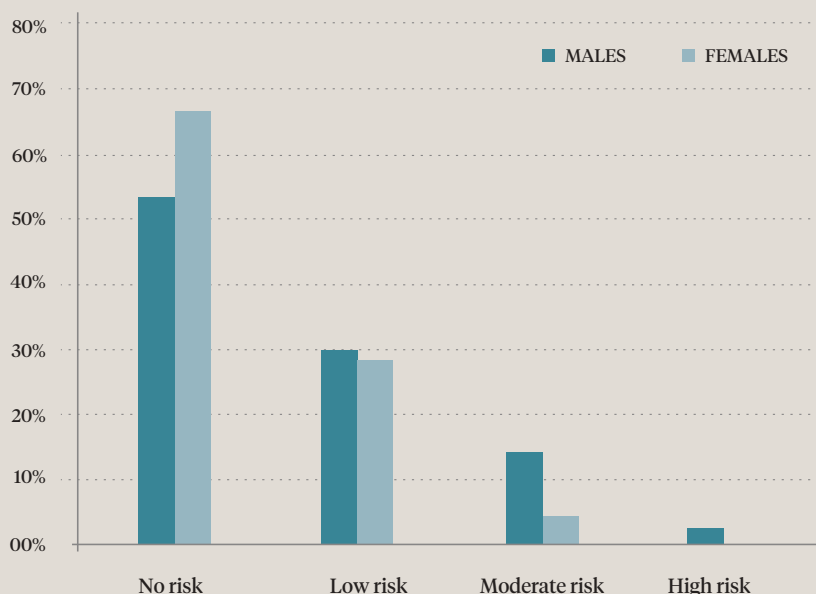
gambling. It seems that foreign students have a greater chance than Italians to develop a distorted relationship with gambling.

It is also interesting to note that, similarly to earlier findings for other risky behaviours, low academic performances increase both the likelihood of gambling and the likelihood of pathological addiction.

Again, vocational training centre students show the greater risk to develop gambling addiction, although students of technical institutes are those who gamble more often.

Due to the limited number of student gamblers, it is not possible to capture clear correlations with the risky behaviours previously considered. However, considering the group who performed the most extreme conducts, there is some evidence of correlation among pathological gamblers and other risky behaviours.

**Fig. 8 GAP Index. Comparison by gender**



5. Since the analysis relating to gambling practiced by Trentino students was addressed in a timely manner elsewhere (Bertelli et al. 2015), we report only the most important aspects.



# Conclusions

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The study highlighted some criticisms in the behaviours of the students in the Trentino province, with particular reference to tobacco, alcohol and hashish/marijuana consumption. Two considerations should be made.

Firstly, it is clear that academic performance (measured in terms of school mark average) represents a relevant protective factor against all the risky behaviours considered.

Secondly, there are strong correlations between smoking tobacco, hashish and marijuana, use and abuse of alcohol and gambling. In other words, young people with addiction problems tend to show a plurality of addictions simultaneously (tobacco, alcohol, gambling).

Consequently, the preventive actions should be directed to strengthen protective factors; counter the risk factors, consolidate the basic skills, the ability to cope with stress situations (*coping*) and *problem-solving*.

The results support those studies showing that broad-spectrum interventions are able to be more effective than interventions focused on a single risky behaviour (Bertelli and Molin 2015).



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