

The Netherlands Compared With The United States

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[Prevalence of substance use in The Netherlands](#)

[Usage in The Netherlands by substance and frequency of use](#)

For basic Netherlands drug use data and information on Dutch drug policies, see The Netherlands section of the Drug War Facts International Chapter.

<http://www.drugwarfacts.org/cms/The+Netherlands>

1.

(Drug Use and Crime Indicators - Comparison Between The US and The Netherlands)

Social Indicator
Comparison Year
USA
Netherlands

Lifetime prevalence of marijuana use

2009

41.5% (ages 12 and up)

1

25.7% (ages 15-64)

2

Past year prevalence of marijuana use

2009

11.3% (ages 12 and up)	1
7.0% (ages 15-64)	2

Lifetime prevalence of heroin use

2009

1.5% (ages 12 and up)	1
0.5% (ages 15-64)	2

Incarceration Rate per 100,000 population

2009 (US) / 2010 (Netherlands)

743	3
94	3

Per capita spending on criminal justice system in Euros!

1998

€379	5
€223	5

Homicide rate per 100,000 population

2009

5.0	6
1.1	6

Source:

1: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). Results from the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Volume II. Technical Appendices and Selected Prevalence Tables (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-38B, HHS Publication No. SMA 10-4586Appendices). Rockville, MD, p. 99, Table G.2, and p. 101, Table G.4.

<http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k9NSDUH/2k9ResultsApps.pdf>

2: "The Netherlands Drug Situation 2011: Report to the EMCDDA by the Reitox National Focal Point" (Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction and the Ministry of Security and Justice Research and Documentation Centre, 2012), p. 33, Table 2.1.1.

<http://www.trimbos.org/~media/English%20site/AF1130%20The%20Netherlands...>

3: Walmsley, Roy, "World Prison Population List" (ninth edition) (London, England: International Centre for Prison Studies, Kings College - London), 2011, p. 3, Table 2, and p. 5, Table 4.

<http://www.prisonstudies.org/publications/list/179-world-prison-populati...>

4: van Dijk, Frans & Jaap de Waard, "Legal infrastructure of the Netherlands in international perspective: Crime control" (Netherlands: Ministry of Justice, June 2000), p. 9, Table S.13.

5: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, "Global Study on Homicide," 2011, Table 9.1, p. 107 and p. 112

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Homicide/Glo...>

2. Basic Data

(Alcohol and Cannabis Use by Youth) "Results—Laws regarding alcohol and cannabis were found to be strictest in the United States, somewhat less strict in Canada, and least strict in the Netherlands. On most measures of drinking, rates were lower in the United States than in Canada or the Netherlands. With United States as the referent, relative risks (RR) for monthly drinking were 1.30 (1.11–1.53) for Canadian boys and 1.55 (1.31–1.83) for girls, and 2.0 (1.73–2.31) for Dutch boys and 1.92 (1.62–2.27) for Dutch girls. Drunkenness was also higher among Canadian boys and girls and Dutch boys. However, rates of cannabis use did not differ between the countries, except that Dutch girls were less likely to use cannabis in the past year (RR= .67; 0.46–0.96)."

Source:

Bruce Simons-Morton, EdD, MPH, William Pickett, PhD, Will Boyce, PhD, Tom F.M. ter Bogt, PhD, and Wilma Vollebergh, PhD, "Cross-National Comparison of Adolescent Drinking and Cannabis Use in the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands," *International Journal of Drug Policy*, Jan. 2010; 21(1):64-69. doi: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2009.02.003, p. 1.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2790541/pdf/nihms97756.pdf>

3.

(Alcohol Prevalence and Drunkenness) "The HBSC survey results indicated that drinking prevalence and drunkenness were lower on all measures among both boys and girls in the United States compared with boys and girls in Canada and boys in the

Netherlands, but there was no difference in drunkenness or age of first drunkenness between American and Dutch girls. The prevalence reported by youth in the United States, with monthly use of 34.0% for males and 29.3% for females, is consistent with other reports (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006; Johnston et al., 2007), and significantly lower than the prevalence reported by Canadian youth of about 45% for both boys and girls and Dutch youth of 67.9% for boys and 56.2% of girls. Of course, 10th grade Dutch students are close in age to the legal drinking age of 16 in the Netherlands. Also, despite higher drinking prevalence, Dutch girls were less likely to report having been drunk by age 14 suggesting that adolescent drinking and drunkenness do not correspond in all population groups. Overall, these cross-national differences in drinking prevalence are somewhat consistent with the hypothesis that higher legal age, more difficult access, and greater penalties for use may have discouraged adolescent drinking in the United States."

Source:

Bruce Simons-Morton, EdD, MPH, William Pickett, PhD, Will Boyce, PhD, Tom F.M. ter Bogt, PhD, and Wilma Vollebergh, PhD, "Cross-National Comparison of Adolescent Drinking and Cannabis Use in the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands," International Journal of Drug Policy, Jan. 2010; 21(1):64-69. doi: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2009.02.003, p. 6.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2790541/pdf/nihms97756.pdf>

4.

(1997, 2001, 2005, and 2009 - *drug usage in The Netherlands*) Prevalence of drug use in the Dutch population 15-64 years of age:

Lifetime Prevalence %

Last Year Prevalence %

1997

2001

2005

2009

1997

2001

2005

2009

Cannabis

19.1

19.5

22.6

25.7

5.5

5.5

5.4

7.0

Cocaine

2.6

2.1

3.4

5.2

0.7

0.7

0.6

1.2

Ecstasy

2.3

3.2

4.3

6.2

0.8

1.1

1.2

1.4

Amphetamine

2.2

2.0

2.1

3.1

0.4

0.4

0.3

0.4

LSD

1.5

1.2

1.4

1.5

-

0.0

0.1

0.1

Heroin

0.3

0.2

0.6

0.5

0.0

0.0

0.0

0.1

Source:

Trimbos Institute, "Drug Situation 2006 The Netherlands by the Reitox National Focal Point: Report to the EMCDDA" (Utrecht, Netherlands: Trimbos-Instituut, 2007), p. 26, Table 2.1.

http://www.wodc.nl/images/1462b_fulltext_tcm44-75372.pdf

"The Netherlands Drug Situation 2011: Report to the EMCDDA by the Reitox National Focal Point" (Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction and the Ministry of Security and Justice Research and Documentation Centre, 2012), p. 33, Table 2.1.1.

<http://www.trimbos.org/~media/English%20site/AF1130%20The%20Netherlands...>

5.

(Drugs Information and Monitoring Services) "During its nearly twenty years of existence, the Drugs Information and Monitoring System (DIMS) has monitored the chemical content of more than 100,000 samples of illicit drugs. These drugs are collected directly on the user's level and there is information exchange between the personnel at the testing facilities and the users. The anonymity of the drug user is guaranteed in order to keep DIMS trustworthy. This enables the collection of data on personal adverse effects and adverse effects experienced by friends, regional origin, date, source of purchase, price and reason for testing. The results of two studies suggest that testing drug users are broadly similar to non-testing users (Benschop, 2002; Korf, 2003). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the DIMS target group is a reflection of all recreational drug users. While

DIMS in a strict sense is only a market monitor, the data are fed back to the local organisations of its network to support their activities targeting the prevention of health threatening situations. In 2010, 8,898 drug samples were delivered to DIMS (DIMS, 2011; see § 10.3)."

Source:

Van Laar, Margriet, et al., (2011). The Netherlands drug situation 2011: report to the EMCDDA by the Reitox National Focal Point. (Utrecht: Trimbos Institute, Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction), pp. 52-53.

http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/attachements.cfm/att_142509_EN_NL-NR2010.pdf

6.

(1997-1999) "The figures for cannabis use among the general population reveal the same pictures. The Netherlands does not differ greatly from other European countries. In contrast, a comparison with the US shows a striking difference in this area: 32.9% of Americans aged 12 and above have experience with cannabis and 5.1% have used in the past month. These figures are twice as high as those in the Netherlands."

Source:

Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, Drug Policy in the Netherlands: Progress Report September 1997-September 1999, The Hague: Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, November 1999!, pp. 7-8.

7. Law and Policy

The Netherlands follows a policy of separating the market for illicit drugs. Cannabis is primarily purchased through coffee shops. Coffee shops offer no or few possibilities for purchasing illicit drugs other than cannabis. Thus The Netherlands achieve a separation of the soft drug market from the hard drugs market - and separation of the 'acceptable risk' drug user from the 'unacceptable risk' drug user.

Source:

Abraham, Manja D., University of Amsterdam, Centre for Drug Research, Places of Drug Purchase in The Netherlands Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, September 1999!, pp. 1-5.

<http://proxy.baremetal.com/csdp.org/research/places.pdf>

8.

Sec. 844. Penalties for simple possession [of Controlled Substances in the United States]

STATUTE

(a) Unlawful acts; penalties

It shall be unlawful for any person knowingly or intentionally to possess a controlled substance unless such substance was obtained directly, or pursuant to a valid prescription or order, from a practitioner, while acting in the course of his professional practice, or except as otherwise authorized by this subchapter or subchapter II of this chapter."

"Any person who violates this subsection may be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than 1 year"

"if he commits such offense after a prior conviction under this subchapter or subchapter II of this chapter, or a prior conviction for any drug, narcotic, or chemical offense chargeable under the law of any State, has become final, he shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment for not less than 15 days but not more than 2 years, and shall be fined a minimum of \$2,500"

"if he commits such offense after two or more prior convictions under this subchapter or subchapter II of this chapter, or two or more prior convictions for any drug, narcotic, or chemical offense chargeable under the law of any State, or a combination of two or more such offenses have become final, he shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment for not less than 90 days but not more than 3 years, and shall be fined a minimum of \$5,000."

Source:

U.S. Code. Title 21, Chapter 13 -- Drug Abuse Prevention and Control -- Section 844, Penalties for Simple Possession, pp. 416-417.

[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usc.cgi?ACTION=RETRIEVE&FILE=\\$\\$xa\\$\\$busc21.wais&start=2939781&SIZE=9863&TYPE=PDF](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usc.cgi?ACTION=RETRIEVE&FILE=$$xa$$busc21.wais&start=2939781&SIZE=9863&TYPE=PDF)

<http://mapinc.org/url/0npxgLDk>

9.

(Coffee Shop Regulation) "In the Opium Act Directives the coffee shop policy is regulated by the so-called AHOJG criteria, which stand for: no advertising, no sale of hard drugs, not selling to persons under the age of 18, not causing public nuisance and not selling more than 5 grams per transaction. In the policy letter the Ministers of Security & Justice and Health announces that the changes in the coffee shop policy will be realized by adding criteria – such as the distance criterion - to the existing AHOJG criteria. The enforcement of these criteria remains primarily the responsibility of the mayor (TK 24077-259)."

Source:

Van Laar, Margriet, et al., (2011). The Netherlands drug situation 2011: report to the EMCDDA by the Reitox National Focal Point. (Utrecht: Trimbos Institute, Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction), p. 22.

http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/attachements.cfm/att_191641_EN_Netherlands_2...

10.

(Diminishing Drug Tourism) "During the past ten years, there were experiments in some Dutch (border) towns to diminish drug tourism: in Venlo coffee shops were relocated to the outskirts of the town; in Rotterdam, Roosendaal/Bergen-op-Zoom and Terneuzen all or some coffee shops were closed; in Roosendaal/Bergen-op-Zoom, Terneuzen and Rotterdam the opening hours of the coffee shops were reduced; in Rotterdam, Venlo and Heerlen some long term projects dealt with the illegal hard drug market of dealing in premises, drugs runners and street dealers.

"On 1 June 2009 16 coffee shops were closed in Rotterdam, because they were located too close to secondary schools and schools for vocational training. Research showed that in areas where coffee shops were closed, there was a decrease both in the occurrence of nuisance (from 58 per cent to 42 per cent) and in the experienced public nuisance (for example: experienced traffic nuisance decreased in areas with closed coffee shops from 51% to 36 % and remained the same in areas where coffee shop had stayed). The respondents had the impression that the supply of cannabis from illegal selling points had also decreased since the closure of the 16 coffee shops. A possible explanation for this development is that more police force was brought on the street after the closures. After the closures, most of the young cannabis users still got their cannabis through friends who buy it at coffee shops, so the measures did not seem to have much effect on the availability of cannabis. Vulnerable young people value the health risks and possible addictive effects of cannabis lower than their more 'healthier' peers (Bieleman et al, 2010).

"After the closure of all the coffee shops in Roosendaal/Bergen-op-Zoom the number of foreign drug tourists diminished with 90 per cent. The reported coffee shop related public nuisance diminished with more than 20 per cent. However, part of the illegal drugs market remained and is still dealing with foreigners. Another possible side effect is the huge rise in housebreaking in Roosendaal en Bergen-op-Zoom since the closure of the coffee shops (Beke & Van de Torre, 2011). Where did the 1.3 million foreign drug tourists, who used to buy cannabis in both towns, go to after the closures? Research showed that a small part of them is still visiting both towns and buys on the illegal market. About 30 per cent went to the eight coffee shops of the neighbouring city of Breda. An unknown part possibly goes to other Dutch towns with coffee shops. If that is the case, it apparently did not result in a rise of reported drug-related nuisance in Breda or those other towns. Also, part of the cannabis sales moved to Belgium (Van der Torre et al 2010; Gemeente Breda 2010)."

Source:

Van Laar, Margriet, et al., (2011). The Netherlands drug situation 2011: report to the EMCDDA by the Reitox National Focal Point. (Utrecht: Trimbos Institute, Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction), pp. 26-27.

http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/attachements.cfm/att_191641_EN_Netherlands_2...

11.

(The Netherlands and Depenalization of Cannabis Use) "There is no evidence that the depenalization component of the 1976 policy, per se, increased levels of cannabis use. On the other hand, the later growth in commercial access to cannabis, after de facto legalization, was accompanied by steep increases in use, even among youth. In interpreting that association, three points deserve emphasis. First, the association may not be causal; we have already seen that recent increases occurred in the United States and Oslo despite very different policies. Second, throughout most of the first two decades of the 1976 policy, Dutch use levels have remained at or below those in the United States. And third, it remains to be seen whether

prevalence levels will drop again in response to the reduction to a 5-g limit, and to recent government efforts to close down coffee shops and more aggressively enforce the regulations."

Source:

MacCoun, Robert and Reuter, Peter, "Interpreting Dutch Cannabis Policy: Reasoning by Analogy in the Legalization Debate," Science (New York, NY: American Association for the Advancement of Science, October 3, 1997), pp. 50-51.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/44564392/Interpreting-Dutch-Cannabis-Policy-Re...>

12.

(US Perception of Dutch Drug Policy) "Illegal Drug Use. The Dutch Opium Act distinguishes between 'hard' drugs that have 'unacceptable' risks (e.g., heroin, cocaine, ecstasy), and 'soft' drugs (cannabis products). Sales of small amounts of cannabis products (under five grams) are 'tolerated' (i.e., not prosecuted, even though technically illegal) in 'coffeeshops' operating under regulated conditions (no minors on premises, no alcohol sales, no hard drug sales, no advertising, and no creating a public nuisance).

"The Health Ministry coordinates drug policy, while the Ministry of Security and Justice is responsible for law enforcement, including the police. Matters relating to local government are the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior. At the municipal level, policy is coordinated in tripartite consultations among the mayor, the chief public prosecutor, and the police."

Source:

"International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume I Drug and Chemical Control," Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, March 2012), p. 334.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/187109.pdf>

13.

(1999 - drug use in The Netherlands) Below are results from a survey of drug use in The Netherlands published in 1999. Note the difference in drug use prevalence compared to the United States. For more information check out The Netherlands section of *Drug War Facts* .

Substance
Ever-Used

Used-in-Past-Year
Used-in-Past-Month
Number-of-Frequent-Users

Alcohol

90.2%

82.5%

73.3%

24.3% of past month users

Cigarettes

67.9%

38.1%

34.3%

" not tracked by survey

Marijuana

15.6%

4.5%

2.5%

25.6% of past month users

Cocaine*

2.1%

0.6%

0.2%

1.8% of past month users

Heroin

0.3%

0.1%

"too low to track

" too low to track

* Crack cocaine is not tracked separately.

Source:

University of Amsterdam, Centre for Drug Research, "Licit and Illicit Drug Use in the Netherlands," 1997 (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, September 1999), pp. 45, 46, 47, 55.

<http://proxy.baremetal.com/csdp.org/research/npo97.pdf>

Related Chapters:

- [International](#)