



Changes in drug use among Italian adolescents in the context of drug policies.

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GPS Expert Meeting
19-20 September 2016, Lisbon





Background

- ✓ In 2006, in order to reduce availability and therefore drug use, the legislative climate has changed towards a more stringent control of illegal drug use modifying the previous law of 1990 (DPR 309/1990).
- ✓ Law n.49/2006 was characterized by stiffer penalties related to the production, trafficking, possession and use of drugs, and by the abolition of any distinctions between different types of illicit drugs, for the period in which it was in force (2006-2014).
- ✓ In 2014, the Italian Constitutional Court repealed Law n.49/2006, restoring the previous one (DPR 309/1990) with distinctions between cannabis and other illegal substances.
- ✓ This new change has opened up a unique field for additional investigations aimed to study the new changes in drug use (if any) and better understand the effectiveness of drug policies on adolescents substance use.





Objectives

The aim of the study is to analyze trends from 2003 to 2015 of:

1. current (*last month*) use of illicit substances

- Occasional cannabis use (only cannabis use: 1-19 times in the last 30 days)
- Frequent cannabis use (only cannabis use: 20 or more times in the last 30 days)
- Poly-use (any illegal use with or without cannabis use)

2. perception of substance availability

- Cannabis
- All other substances

3. Places to find substances

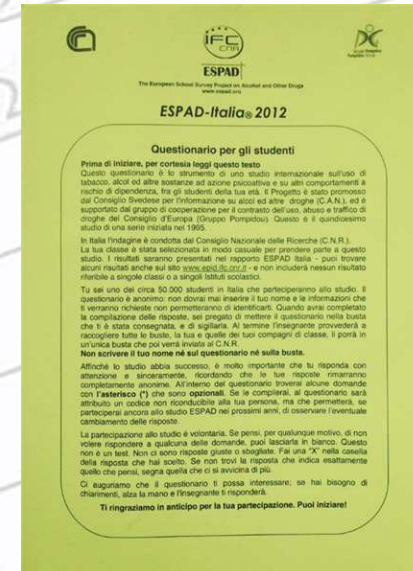
- Cannabis
- All other substances





Materials and Methods

- 1) Data drawn from ESPAD® Italia 2003-2015.
- 2) The survey takes place every year in March–April and its assessment is carried out with a self-administered questionnaire (paper and pencil).
- 3) A representative Italian student sample, aged 15–19 years is sampled each year.
- 4) The sample size over time ranges between 25,299 (2003) and 41,365 (2005) and response rate ranges between 86% and 96%.



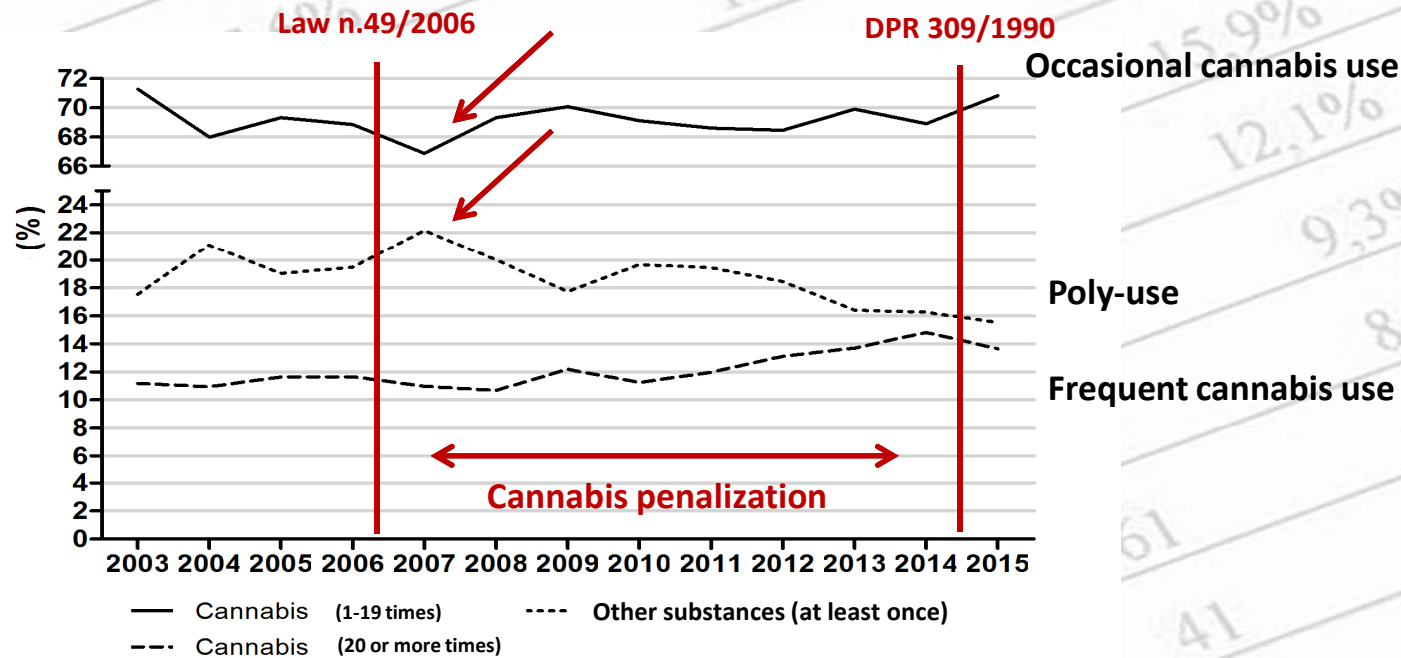


Characteristics of current users

	Occasional cannabis use	Frequent cannabis use	Poly-use
Last month use	70%	14%	16%
Cannabis	100	100	77.7
Cocaine	0	0	57.7
Heroin	0	0	34.5
Stimulants	0	0	61.1
Hallucinogens	0	0	47.9
Energy drink	44.6	56.2	63.4
Smart drugs	3.4	3.8	28.2
Sedatives	5.6	4.9	25.8
Binge drinking	67.4	73.5	79.4
Last year use			
Gambling	36.2	45.5	53.6
Problematic Gambling	13.0	21.7	42.2
School variables			
Truancy (3 or more days a week)	20.5	33.9	33.9
Troubles with teachers	26.6	36.0	49.4
Low school achievement	8.3	11.6	9.7
Family relationship			
Satisfied with mother	73.8	71.8	66.9
Satisfied with father	62.5	61.8	57.6
Satisfied with brothers/sisters	65.0	65.9	58.3
Parental monitoring	77.7	69.8	60.8



Trend of current users



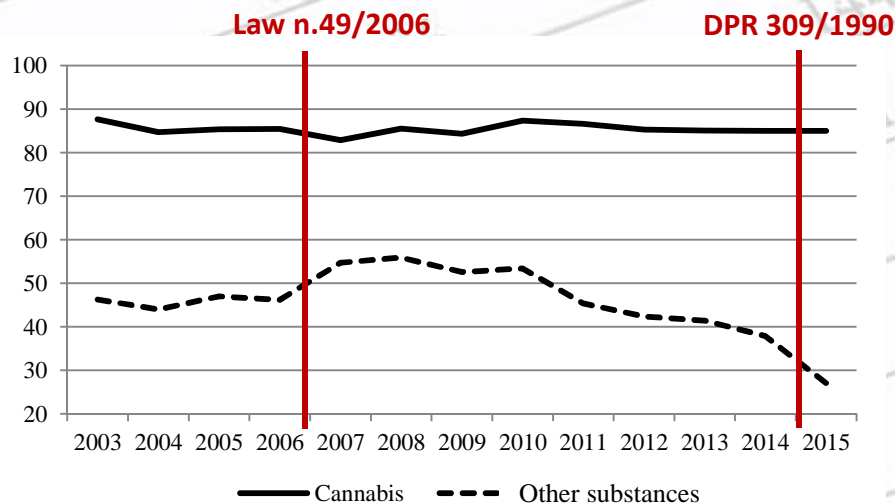
- Limited law effect in 2007 on occasional cannabis use (decreased)
- In 2007, a slightly increase in poly-use = substitution effect? May it depend from the Law?
- From 2010, an increase in frequent cannabis use and a decrease in poly-use = substitution effect? May it depend from market dynamics?
- Between 2014-2015, the proportion of poly-use and frequent cannabis use is similar



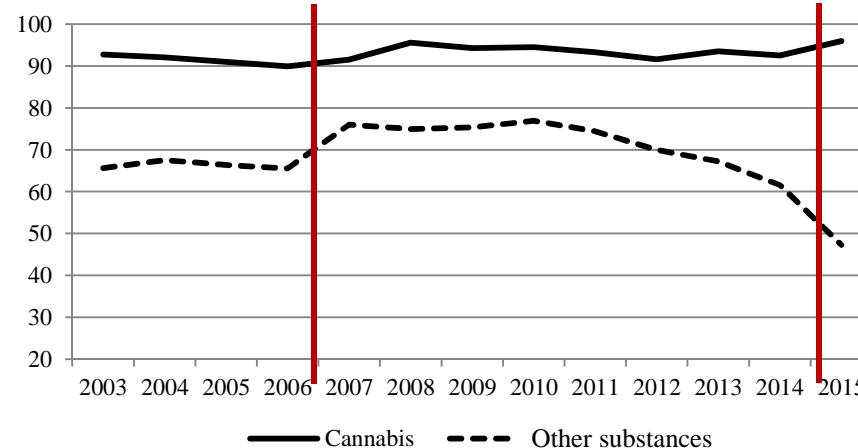


Trend of availability stratified by type of current users

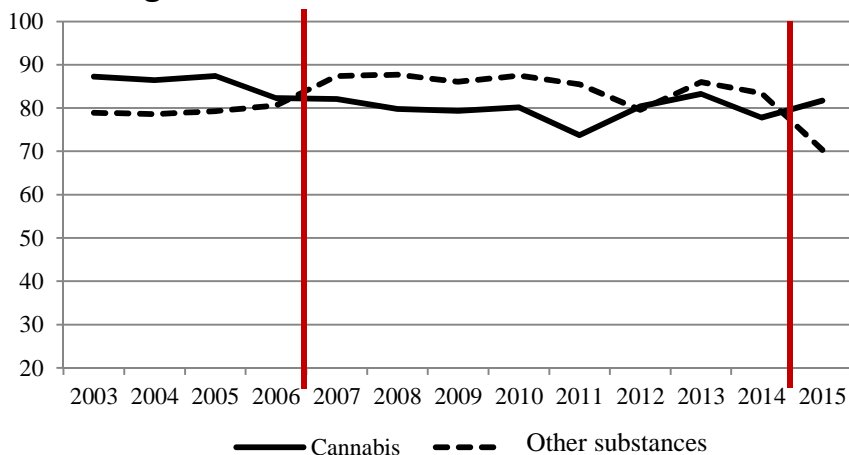
Among OCCASIONAL cannabis users



Among FREQUENT cannabis users



Among POLY-USERS



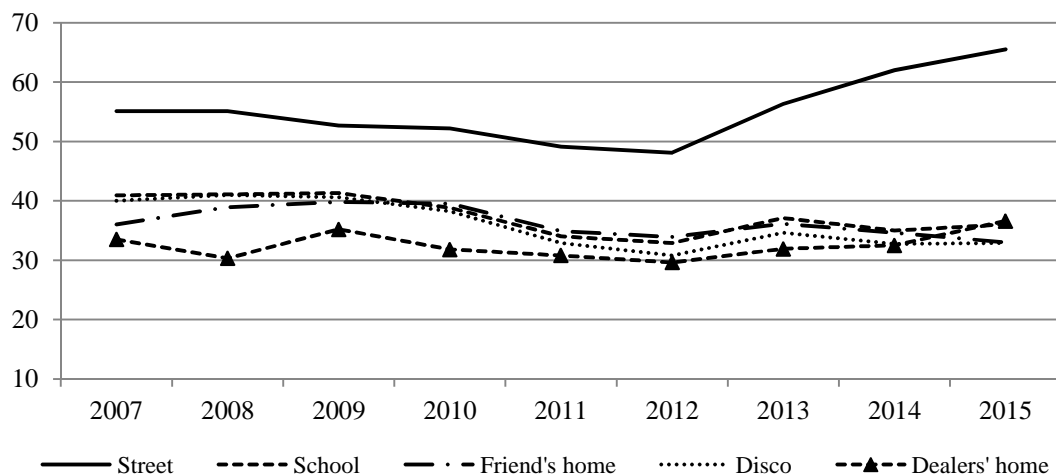
A slight decrease in availability of cannabis and a contextual increase of availability of other illicit substances in 2007.



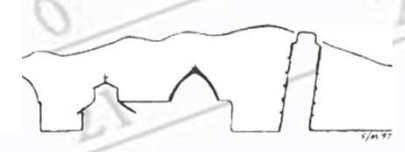
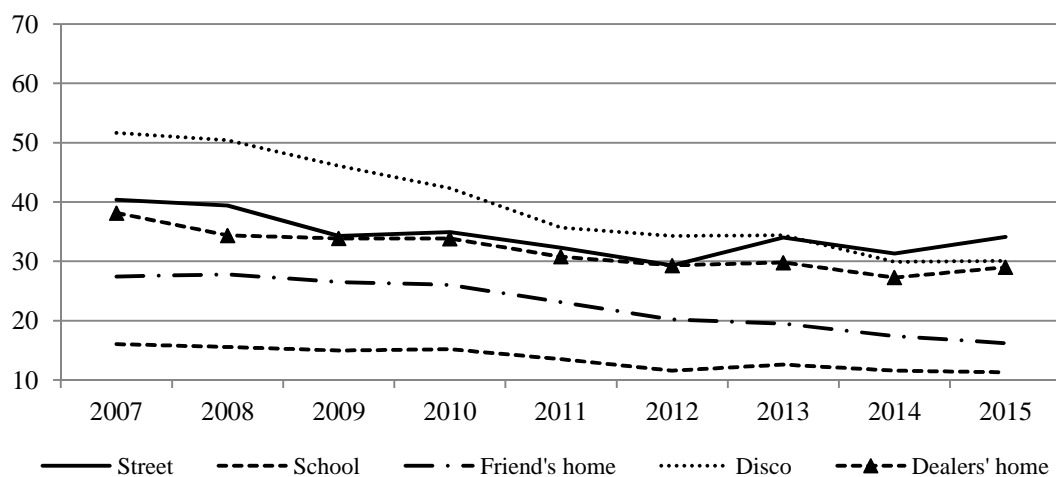


Places to find drugs among current users

Cannabis availability setting



Other drugs availability setting



Limits

- Percentages must be interpreted with caution, as these are self-reported values.
- School-based surveys provide prevalence estimates of substance use, but do not capture other high-risk adolescents (NEET), and this subgroup is at a higher risk of illegal drug use.
- Another problem when studying association between consumption and accessibility is that the risk of being punished – as possessor - is not observable; it could be included as a component of the perceived availability.
- The “availability to get cannabis if they wanted” could be thought of as a multidimensional factor including knowing drug dealers and where to get it, difficulty to get to “safety” access place, and possibly even monetary cost.





Conclusions

A slight decrease in both consumption and availability of cannabis and a contextual increase of consumption and availability of other illicit substances in 2007, the year after the enter in force of the Law on “cannabis penalization”.

However, it was a short-term effect of modest entity, followed by a new increasing trend as of 2010, mainly among frequent cannabis users.

Few years after, a reverse tendency was observed: starting from 2011-2012, an increase was detected in cannabis use in general, as well as in its availability “on the street”.

These results suggest that current drug users are able to adapt their consumption habits to market dynamics and policy changes, modifying it on the basis of a complex set of socio-cultural and economic factors.





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Acknowledgments:

Elisa Benedetti

Arianna Cutilli

Marco Scalese

Valeria Siciliano



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National abstracts

Thanks for the attention!

