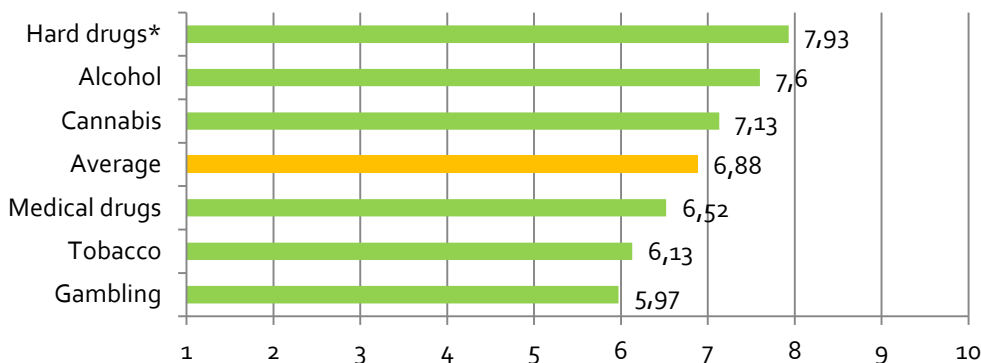


**Cocaine, amphetamines and heroin are perceived by European citizens as the ‘addictions’ with the most severe consequences to society, whereas tobacco, despite being responsible for the largest share of premature deaths caused by addictive substances, is perceived as having one of the least severe impacts on society**

**addictions  
severity  
popular perceptions  
addictiveness**

Popular images of different addictive substances and behaviours were investigated in five European countries (Poland, Norway, Germany, Finland, and Sweden), via surveys directed at largely representative population samples (total N= 4.843). There are, in all five countries, large differences in the perception of the severity to society of different addictions. Addiction to ‘hard’ narcotic drugs (heroin, amphetamines, and cocaine) is, with a few exceptions, seen as the far most dangerous problem to society, whereas behavioural addictions, such as addictions to gambling and internet use, generally are perceived as much less severe. Largely the same differences, although less pronounced, appear as concerns the perceived risk to get addicted to various substances and/or activities. Most respondents seem to adopt a rather “moral” view on addiction problems, holding the individual, rather than other circumstances responsible, both for acquiring and solving an addiction problem. The main exceptions here seem to be addictions to medical drugs, ‘hard’ narcotic drugs, and alcohol, where the individual is more often seen as a victim.

**Perceived social severity of various addictions, from not at all serious (1) to extremely serious (10), based on surveys in 5 EU countries: Poland, Norway, Germany, Finland and Sweden**



Comparing European citizens’ perceived personal and social dangers of various addictions with the objective health burdens of the same addictive substances (as documented in other ALICE RAP work; see, for instance [Mortality burden](#), or [Prevalence of alcohol disorders](#)), may have important policy implications.

\* amphetamines. cocaine & heroin

## READ MORE

Blomqvist J, Raitasalo K, Melberg HO, Schreckenber D, Peschel C, Klingemann J & Koski-Jännes A (2014) *Popular images of addiction*. Addictions and Lifestyles in Contemporary Europe. Reframing Addictions Project (ALICE RAP): [Deliverable 3.3](#)

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