

Demographic Determinants of Drug Addiction in Algerian Society An Analytical Statistical Study Based on Data from the National Office for the Fight Against Drugs and Drug Addiction (2012–2022)

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Abstract

Drug addiction is a complex social phenomenon that poses a multi-dimensional challenge. Given the threat it poses to individual safety and the stability of Algerian society, this study analyzes the demographic determinants associated with this phenomenon and examines the extent of addiction in Algerian society, based on data from the National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction for the period 2012–2022. The study focuses on the main demographic determinants contributing to addiction namely gender, age, marital status, and occupational status. The research reached several conclusions, the most important of which are: the number of cases related to trafficking, possession, and consumption increased, with the total number of recorded cases rising to more than eight times its original figure, and the number of people involved increasing by over 570%. Regarding demographic determinants, the study revealed a gender disparity in drug addiction, with higher prevalence among men; however, in recent years, a rapid increase in addiction rates among women has been recorded. The phenomenon is most widespread among youth aged 16 to 35, with a worrying increase among children under 15. Higher rates of addiction are recorded among single and unemployed individuals, with a noticeable rise among students in recent years. The data also indicate the predominance of cannabis and psychotropic substances among the most addictive drugs, along with the emergence of multiple forms of addiction reflecting the complexity of the phenomenon and the diversity of its behavioral patterns.

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Introduction

The phenomenon of drug abuse is one of the greatest problems facing humanity and threatening its future, because it results in the destruction and corruption of society on the one hand and threatens the health and safety of the individual and his social status on the other.

Because of the seriousness and negative impact of this phenomenon on members of society, it has attracted the attention of many researchers and thinkers; conferences and global and regional seminars have been held and international conventions concluded to monitor it in order to preserve human rights.

The problem of drugs in Algerian society has not been isolated from the changes taking place in the international scene, as official reports indicate a significant increase in the number of drug abuse cases and the expansion of the groups affected by it.

The number of cases in Algeria (trafficking and dealing, possession and consumption, cultivation) handled was 6226 cases in 2010, and the number rose to 96797 cases in 2022.

Therefore, it has become necessary to move beyond the general approach to this phenomenon towards a deeper analysis based on official statistics and to deconstruct the demographic determinants associated with it, with the aim of understanding the target groups and explaining the variations recorded over the years.

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It should be noted that demographic analysis of addiction is not limited to merely classifying cases by demographic variables; rather, it is a scientific entry that makes it possible to monitor the demographic factors controlling the spread of the phenomenon and to assess its dynamics.

Variables such as age, sex, marital status and occupational status are all determinants that help identify the groups most exposed to the phenomenon.

Based on the above, addressing the phenomenon of drug addiction from a demographic perspective supported by statistical data not only contributes to diagnosing the dimensions of the problem, but also constitutes an essential tool in guiding public policies and developing prevention and intervention programmes.

From this standpoint, this study aims to analyse the demographic determinants of drug addiction in Algeria during the period 2012–2022, relying on the data of the National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction, in order to provide an accurate scientific reading that helps to deepen understanding of the phenomenon and deal with it more effectively.

Drugs

Definition of drugs

Drugs are among the complex phenomena that have aroused the interest of researchers and specialists in various fields because of their broad and deep impact on the individual and society.

Studying and analysing this phenomenon requires, first, a look at its meaning from both the linguistic and terminological perspectives, in order to build an accurate understanding of the nature of drugs and the scope of the term and its connotations in different contexts. The following presents the most important concepts.

Linguistically:

The Arabic word khadr (خدر) refers to darkness and concealment: al-khdār means a dark night, and al-layla al-khadra is a dark, rainy night.

It also comes in the sense of lethargy, and khadr al-a`dā' linguistically refers to numbness that overtakes limbs such as the leg, hand and body due to laziness and torpor (Salim al-Hasani, 2023, p. 12).

It also denotes the body's inability to perform its functions and the suspension of sensation and feeling.

Terminologically:

Drugs are defined as any natural or manufactured substance that partially or completely removes the human mind, making the user unaware of what he is doing or how he behaves, and that produces unreal perceptions.

Some types of drugs may be used in medical fields under medical supervision and for urgent need, in small amounts that do not cause addiction (Lakhder Goul, 2020, p. 4).

The **World Health Organization** defines drugs as any raw, prepared or synthetic substance that contains hypnotic, sedative or intoxicating elements which, if used for non-medical purposes, lead to a state of habituation or addiction, causing psychological or physical harm to the individual and society (Salim al-Hasani, 2023, p. 14).

Socially, drugs have been defined as those substances that lead their users or dealers to delinquent behaviour.

They are also substances that take away the mind, so the person using them exhibits deviant behaviour (Abd al-Aziz bin Ali al-Ghareeb, 2006, p. 33).

Based on the foregoing, drugs can be defined as natural or manufactured substances containing chemical compounds that cause temporary or permanent changes in awareness, perception and behaviour.

Taking them outside organized medical frameworks leads to habituation or addiction, accompanied by physical and psychological harm of varying seriousness. From a social perspective, drugs are factors that contribute to the spread of deviant and delinquent behaviour because they cause imbalances in personal, family and societal equilibrium, making them a complex phenomenon with health, social and security dimensions that calls for comprehensive and systematic preventive and therapeutic interventions.

Definition of Addiction

Before analysing the phenomenon of drug addiction, it is necessary to examine the core of this concept from the linguistic and terminological perspectives, as this constitutes a fundamental entry point for any scientific treatment or objective analysis.

A precise understanding of the term addiction in its linguistic and cognitive dimensions is a pivotal step in outlining the features of the phenomenon and revealing its nature.

Because addiction is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, its definitions have varied according to the intellectual orientations of scientists and researchers.

The following presents the most prominent concepts.

Linguistically:

The Arabic word *idman* (إدمان – “addiction”) is derived from the verb *admana – yudmin – admin – idmān*; it is said “*admana al-shay*” (الشيء أدمن), meaning he kept doing it and continued.

Accordingly, the linguistic meaning implies that addiction denotes regularity and persistence in doing something to the extent of attachment to it and an inability to cease it.

Terminologically:

Scholars have differed in defining addiction.

It has been defined as the repeated use of a psychoactive substance in a manner that causes the user to develop a strong craving for it, accompanied by an inability or refusal to quit or reduce use, and often withdrawal symptoms appear when use is stopped (Salim al-Hasani, 2023, p. 53).

The **World Health Organization** has defined it as a state of temporary or chronic intoxication resulting from the repeated use of a natural, manufactured or synthetic narcotic substance (Abd al-Aziz bin Ali al-Ghareeb, 2006, p. 29).

It has also been defined as the use of medically, socially and physically harmful substances in large quantities or doses and for long periods, making the individual accustomed to them and subject to their influence and making it difficult or even impossible to quit them (Mushid Nabila, 2024, p. 162).

Addiction also refers to the condition resulting from repeated, regular use of the narcotic substance.

This condition is characterised by the following features (Abd al-Aziz bin Ali al-Ghareeb, 2006, p. 29):

- A compulsive desire to obtain the drug (attachment).
- A tendency to increase the dose.
- The emergence of psychological and physiological dependence.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that drug addiction is a behavioural and psychological state resulting from the repeated use of a narcotic substance, whether natural or manufactured.

It is characterised by a compulsive attachment to the drug, accompanied by a persistent inability or refusal to stop or reduce use despite an awareness of the health, psychological and social harms.

This state is usually accompanied by withdrawal symptoms when use is discontinued, a growing inclination to increase the dose and the emergence of psychological and physical dependence, making it extremely difficult or even impossible—to quit without specialised therapeutic intervention.

Types of Drugs

Today, drugs are among the complex phenomena whose effects are not limited to the health aspect only; they also affect psychological, social and economic aspects.

Technological openness and ease of access to prohibited substances have contributed to the rise in consumption rates.

The danger of this phenomenon stems from the multiplicity of types of drugs and their differing effects, as they differ in terms of composition, source and method of use.

From this standpoint, recognising the types of drugs is a necessary entry point for a broader understanding of addiction mechanisms and risks.

Drugs are classified according to the source from which they are derived into three main categories:

1. **Natural drugs:** these are drugs found in their natural form, without undergoing complex chemical processes or major industrial transformations.

These substances have been known since ancient times and have been used in various societies for therapeutic, ritual and recreational purposes before their danger to physical and psychological health was discovered.

Examples include cannabis, hashish, cocaine, opium and khat.

2. **Semi-synthetic drugs (partially natural):** this category is produced by partially modifying natural substances, i.e. the basic narcotic substance is extracted from a natural source and then transformed in the laboratory to obtain a new compound that is more effective or concentrated.

This type of drug is very dangerous. Examples include heroin, morphine and others.

3. **Synthetic (manufactured) drugs:** this category includes substances that are manufactured entirely in chemical laboratories without relying on any natural source. These substances are often designed to mimic or multiply the effects of traditional drugs. Their danger lies in the difficulty of controlling their

effect and the rapidity with which they cause addiction, as well as their large health and psychological risks. They often take the form of pills such as hallucinogens, stimulants and amphetamines.

Evolution of Drugs in Algeria

Drugs in Algeria have developed remarkably in recent years, owing to a number of factors.

The following discusses the development of the phenomenon based on statistics from the National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction.

Evolution of Processed Trafficking cases

Cases of drug trafficking and dealing are among the escalating challenges facing Algeria in recent years, in the context of regional and global transformations that have affected the dynamics of organised crime.

Monitoring the development of these cases has become an important tool for understanding how the phenomenon has aggravated.

Statistical data for the period 2012–2022, shown in **Table 1**, reveal an alarming upward trend in the number of processed cases, whether those related to trafficking and dealing or to possession and consumption.

This reflects the complexity of the phenomenon and the expansion of its geographical and social scope.

Table 1 – Evolution of Processed Trafficking Cases in Algeria (2012–2022)

Case type/ Years	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Trafficking & dealing cases	2 948	3 592	3 097	4 676	6 773	8 072	9 725	10 477	13 577	17 584	23 463
Possession & consumpti on cases	9 156	10 384	8 019	15 007	23 329	24 858	29 748	26 671	38 148	41 473	73 285
Cultivation cases	5	13	14	9	11	22	31	32	–	34	49
Total cases	12 109	13 989	11 130	19 692	30 113	32 952	39 504	37 180	51 753	59 091	96 797

Source: National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction – annual summaries of quantities seized of drugs and psychotropic substances by control services, and annual activity reports on combating drugs and addiction.

Table 1 shows that trafficking and dealing cases increased significantly, rising from 2 948 cases in 2012 to 23 463 cases in 2022—a rise of more than 690 % which may be attributed to the expansion of trafficking networks on the one hand or to the improved performance of security agencies in detecting them on the other.

Cases of possession and consumption rose from 9 156 to 73 285 during the same period, a nearly 700 % increase, indicating a dangerous increase in local consumption, especially among youth.

Cultivation cases, though limited in number, ranged between 5 and 49 per year and also recorded a slight upward trend, pointing to the possibility of the emergence of illegal cultivation sites that require careful monitoring.

Overall, total recorded cases increased from 12 109 in 2012 to 96 797 in 2022—an almost eight-fold increase in a decade, with notable jumps in recent years.

These statistics reflect an alarming dynamic of the phenomenon, calling for strengthening preventive mechanisms, intensifying awareness and social support efforts, as well as developing statistical monitoring systems to support decision-making and formulate effective public policies in the field of drug control.

Evolution of Persons Involved in Trafficking Cases

Cases of drug trafficking constitute criminal phenomena with a serious strategic dimension because they pose a direct threat to national security and social and economic stability.

These cases are the result of a complex intertwining of organised criminal networks that rely in their activities on sophisticated trafficking mechanisms, benefiting from technological advancements and, at times, weak border control.

This phenomenon exacerbates the challenges faced by states, not only in the security domain but also in terms of rising rates of organised crime and the spread of addiction.

From this standpoint, the development of the number of persons involved in trafficking cases in Algeria is presented below.

Table 2 – Evolution of Persons Involved in Trafficking Cases in Algeria (2012–2022)

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of persons involved	16 672	19 167	15 448	26 116	37 614	42 432	49 749	46 890	64 321	73 539	113 012

Source: National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction – annual summaries of quantities seized of drugs and psychotropic substances by control services, and annual activity reports on combating drugs and addiction.

The data in Table 2 indicate an upward trend in the number of persons involved in trafficking cases in Algeria, reflecting the widening scope of the phenomenon on both social and organisational levels.

The number of persons involved increased from 16 672 in 2012 to 113 012 in 2022, a rise of approximately 578 % over a decade.

The data show significant increases during 2015, 2016, 2020 and 2022, with the number of those involved exceeding one hundred thousand for the first time in the last year.

This leap can be explained either by the expansion of trafficking networks and increased demand for smuggled substances, or by improved effectiveness of monitoring and detection agencies that now uncover larger numbers of participants in Algeria.

This accelerated development reflects the transformation of the phenomenon from a limited individual nature to an organised and intricate nature, requiring a comprehensive re-evaluation of the approaches

adopted to combat it, particularly by focusing on reducing the sources of recruitment and enhancing social prevention, as well as strengthening multilevel judicial and security cooperation.

Demographic Determinants of Drug Addiction

Sex

Sex is one of the important demographic variables used in the analysis of demographic and social phenomena because it has direct and indirect effects on patterns of behaviour and interaction within society.

The differences between males and females are not limited to biological characteristics but extend to the social and cultural roles assigned to each.

Demographic studies show that gender-related differences often lead to clear disparities in various indicators, making this variable an essential analytical tool in understanding the dynamics of society and the distribution of phenomena among its members. On this basis, the distribution of addicts by sex will be addressed below.

Table 3 – Distribution of Addicts by Sex in Algeria (2012–2022)

Sex / Metric	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Male – number	9 434	12 964	12 725	16 520	19 379	20 024	21 972	20 645	19 072	17 547	21 999
Male – %	95.32 %	95.24 %	92.91 %	91.57 %	90.11 %	89.22 %	89.96 %	88.29 %	88.14 %	89.07 %	80.96 %
Female – number	463	648	971	1 520	2 128	2 420	2 452	2 737	2 566	2 154	5 174
Female – %	4.68 %	4.76 %	7.09 %	8.43 %	9.89 %	10.78 %	10.03 %	11.71 %	11.86 %	10.93 %	19.04 %
Total addicts	9 897	13 612	13 696	18 040	21 507	22 444	24 424	23 382	21 638	19 701	27 173

Source: National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction – annual summaries of quantities seized of drugs and psychotropic substances by control services, and annual activity reports on combating drugs and addiction.

Table 3 shows a clear disparity in distribution by sex. The total number of addicts rose from 9 897 cases in 2012 to 27 173 cases in 2022, reflecting a worrying increase in the spread of the phenomenon.

Males represented the largest share of addicts throughout the period, but their proportion gradually decreased from 95.32 % in 2012 to 80.96 % in 2022, indicating a relative narrowing of the gender gap.

Conversely, the phenomenon of drug addiction among females in Algeria increased at a faster rate than among males: the number of female addicts rose from 463 in 2012 to 5 174 in 2022, with their share rising from 4.68 % to 19.04 %.

This upward trend among females is a demographic indicator that the traditional social barriers that used to limit women's exposure to addictive behaviours are breaking down; it may be linked to changes in

women's social roles, increased psychological pressures and weak prevention mechanisms directed at female groups.

It is also noted that some years showed relative fluctuations in the number of addicts, especially during 2020 and 2021—a period that coincided with the Covid-19 crisis and the social and health restrictions that accompanied it.

Overall, these indicators reveal the need to view the phenomenon from a comprehensive demographic perspective that takes into account the dynamics of social and demographic change and requires preventive interventions targeted at both men and women according to the specificity of each sex.

Age

Age is one of the basic elements in demographic analysis, of great importance to economic and social policy makers and decision-makers as well as to researchers in demographic studies.

It represents an essential explanatory indicator that helps to understand the structure of society and monitor its demographic transformations.

It also expresses the age distribution of the population within defined groups, providing a necessary knowledge base to explain many demographic and social phenomena.

Based on the above, the distribution of addicts by age groups is addressed below.

Table 4 – Distribution of Addicts by Age in Algeria (2014–2022)

Age group / Metric	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
< 15 yrs – number	506	762	617	630	1 147	882	931	299	906
< 15 yrs – %	3.69 %	4.23 %	2.87 %	2.81 %	4.69 %	3.77 %	4.30 %	1.52 %	3.33 %
16–25 yrs – number	5 093	7 489	8 489	8 054	8 770	9 491	9 958	8 240	9 012
16–25 yrs – %	37.19 %	41.57 %	39.47 %	35.88 %	35.91 %	40.59 %	46.02 %	41.83 %	33.17 %
26–35 yrs – number	5 288	6 390	8 212	7 970	9 381	7 496	7 542	7 692	12 750
26–35 yrs – %	38.61 %	35.42 %	38.18 %	35.51 %	38.41 %	32.06 %	34.86 %	39.04 %	46.92 %
> 35 yrs – number	2 809	3 399	4 189	5 790	5 126	5 513	3 207	3 470	4 505

> 35 yrs – %	20.51 %	18.84 %	19.48 %	25.80 %	20.99 %	23.58 %	14.82 %	17.61 %	16.58 %
Total addicts	13 696	18 040	21 507	22 444	24 424	23 382	21 638	19 701	27 173

Source: National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction – annual summaries of quantities seized of drugs and psychotropic substances by control services, and annual activity reports on combating drugs and addiction.

The distribution of addicts by age group in Algeria indicates the prevalence of the addiction phenomenon among youth. The age groups 16–25 and 26–35 recorded the highest percentages of total cases each year, exceeding 70 % of all addicts.

The high rate is due to the vulnerability of this group to social, economic and psychological pressures and the weakness of protection and containment mechanisms.

The 16–25 group recorded its highest percentage in 2020 at 46.02 %, while the 26–35 group reached its peak in 2022 at 46.92 %.

The under-15 group, although limited and not exceeding 5 % in most years, recorded a rate approaching 4.7 % in 2018, which is a worrying indicator of the spread of addiction among children in Algeria, requiring early preventive intervention, especially in family and school environments.

On the other hand, the over-35 group experienced a relative decline, especially after 2017, falling from 25.8 % to about 14.8 % in 2020 before rising slightly again.

Given these percentages, youth are the group most exposed to the risk of addiction, necessitating the directing of preventive policies and awareness programmes toward this group in particular, with strengthening mechanisms for monitoring and early intervention, especially in school and work settings.

Marital Status

Marital status is a key demographic variable used to classify the population according to their current marital status.

It represents an important analytical dimension in statistical and demographic studies because of its direct connection to many demographic and social phenomena.

In the context of analysing the phenomenon of drug addiction, including this variable is a methodological necessity, considering the potential impact of marital status on addictive behaviour whether as a protective factor or as a stimulating determinant—depending on the social and psychological circumstances surrounding the individual. Based on the above, the distribution of addicts by marital status is addressed below.

Table 5 – Distribution of Addicts by Marital Status in Algeria (2014–2022)

Marital status / Metric	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Married – number	2 450	3 843	4 987	7 106	5 820	5 392	6 667	5 785	6 524
Married – %	17.89 %	21.30 %	23.19 %	31.66 %	23.83 %	23.06 %	30.81 %	29.36 %	24.01 %
Single – number	10 942	13 197	15 789	13 884	17 506	16 108	12 971	12 332	17 169
Single – %	79.82 %	73.16 %	73.41 %	61.86 %	77.67 %	68.89 %	59.95 %	62.60 %	63.18 %

Other (divorced/widowed/separated) – number	304	1 000	731	1 454	1 098	1 882	2 000	1 584	3 480
Other – %	2.22 %	5.54 %	3.40 %	6.48 %	4.50 %	8.05 %	9.24 %	8.04 %	12.81 %
Total addicts	13 69 6	18 04 0	21 50 7	22 44 4	24 42 4	23 38 2	21 63 8	19 70 1	27 17 3

Source: National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction – annual summaries of quantities seized of drugs and psychotropic substances by control services, and annual activity reports on combating drugs and addiction.

From Table 5 we note that singles constitute the largest segment among addicts, with percentages ranging between 59.95 % and 79.82 %.

This can be explained by the fact that singles mostly belong to the youth category, which is characterized by weak family and economic stability and low social control mechanisms, making them more exposed to idleness and marginalization and thus more susceptible to engaging in addictive behaviors.

By contrast, the married category appears at lower percentages, ranging between 17.89 % and 31.66 %, with a noticeable rise in 2017.

Although marriage is assumed to have a protective role by enhancing emotional and social stability, these percentages indicate that this role is not always effective, especially in cases of marital tension or economic pressures that may push some individuals to use drugs as a means of escaping daily problems.

The category classified as “other” – which likely includes divorced, widowed, separated and those whose status is not declared – showed a gradual increase, from 2.22 % in 2014 to 12.81 % in 2022.

This significant development reflects the impact of changes in family structure and the decline of social support, especially in cases of partner loss or separation, which exacerbates feelings of isolation and loneliness and increases the likelihood of resorting to addiction.

Based on this distribution, marital status proves to be an important explanatory indicator in studying the phenomenon of addiction in Algeria, reflecting the individual’s family and social conditions.

Therefore, including this variable in demographic analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing addictive behaviour and supports the need for preventive approaches that consider differences in marital status, focusing on categories most at risk.

Occupational Status

Occupational status is one of the important demographic variables used in population and social studies to analyse individuals’ positions within the economic structure of society.

It represents the individual’s current status in the labour market (employed, unemployed, or outside the labour force).

The importance of this variable lies in its role as a direct indicator of the level of economic and social integration and its ability to reveal class disparities within society.

Therefore, it holds great importance in analytical demographic studies because of its close connection with a number of phenomena related to individual behaviour and interactions.

Thus, including it in the analysis is not merely a technical classification; it rather represents an analytical tool to understand the social and economic dynamics that influence individual behaviour and orientations in society.

Based on the above, the distribution of addicts by occupational status is addressed below.

Table 6 – Distribution of Addicts by Occupational Status in Algeria (2015–2022)

Occupational status / Metric	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Student number	1 665	1 939	2 231	3 072	3 265	3 006	3 240	4 402
Student – %	9.23 %	9.02 %	9.94 %	12.58 %	13.96 %	13.89 %	16.44 %	16.20 %
Worker number	5 462	7 563	10 552	10 435	7 235	9 433	6 495	11 531
Worker – %	30.28 %	35.16 %	47.01 %	42.72 %	30.94 %	43.60 %	32.97 %	42.44 %
Unemployed number	10 913	12 005	9 661	10 917	12 882	9 199	9 966	11 240
Unemployed – %	60.49 %	55.82 %	43.05 %	44.70 %	55.09 %	42.51 %	50.59 %	41.36 %
Total addicts	18 040	21 507	22 444	24 424	23 382	21 638	19 701	27 173

Source: National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction – annual summaries of quantities seized of drugs and psychotropic substances by control services, and annual activity reports on combating drugs and addiction.

Table 6 shows a clear disparity in addiction rates according to the occupational status of addicts in Algeria. The unemployed category recorded the largest percentages during the study period, reaching 60.49 % in 2015 before gradually declining to 41.36 % in 2022.

This confirms the close relationship between unemployment and addiction given the characteristics of this group: idleness, frustration and loss of hope, social marginalisation, economic pressures, poor psychological support and easy access to drugs, among other factors.

In contrast, the worker category recorded a noticeable increase in addiction rates, rising from 30.28 % to 42.44 % during the same period, which may be attributed to pressures associated with the work environment, job instability or exposure to stress, especially in weak and unstructured employment sectors.

The student category, although representing the lowest percentages, witnessed a continuous increase from 9.23 % to 16.20 %, a worrying development indicating the spread of the phenomenon in educational settings in Algeria as a result of accumulated social, psychological and academic pressures, weak guidance and psychological follow-up within educational institutions, and exposure to risky behaviours.

Therefore, these data reflect that occupational status is a central demographic variable in understanding patterns of addiction, necessitating the adoption of preventive and therapeutic approaches based on the characteristics of each occupational category and addressing the associated economic, social and psychological dimensions.

Type of Drug

The type of drug is one of the basic determinants in designing treatment pathways for addiction because of differences in the pharmacological characteristics and psychological and behavioural effects of each drug.

Each type of drug requires a specific treatment pattern in terms of the nature of medical interventions, the duration of treatment and the possible relapse rate.

Classification of treatment by type of drug helps understand differences in treatment response, estimate the complexity of cases and determine the resources needed for each category.

Therefore, analysing treatment patterns according to the type of drug not only describes the therapeutic reality but also provides a tool for evaluating the effectiveness of adopted programmes and guiding preventive and therapeutic policies on accurate scientific bases.

Table 7 – Distribution of addicts by type of drug in Algeria (2015–2022)

Drug type / Metric	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Cannabis number	4 832	5 507	6 667	6 505	4 990	5 102	6 053	8 891
Cannabis – %	26.79 %	25.60 %	29.63 %	26.63 %	21.34 %	23.58 %	30.72 %	32.72 %
Psychotropic substances number	4 233	6 112	6 862	6 850	6 096	3 474	4 569	6 792
Psychotropics – %	23.46 %	28.42 %	30.57 %	28.05 %	26.07 %	16.50 %	23.19 %	25.00 %
Poly-addiction – number	6 825	7 125	6 661	7 401	7 799	9 263	5 734	7 125
Poly-addiction – %	37.83 %	33.13 %	29.68 %	30.30 %	33.35 %	42.81 %	29.11 %	26.21 %
Other cases – number	2 150	2 763	2 254	3 668	4 497	3 799	3 345	4 365
Other cases – %	11.92 %	12.85 %	10.04 %	15.02 %	19.23 %	17.56 %	16.98 %	16.06 %
Total treated addicts	18 040	21 507	22 444	24 424	23 382	21 638	19 701	27 173

Source: National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction – annual summaries of quantities seized of drugs and psychotropic substances by control services, and annual activity reports on combating drugs and addiction.

The data in Table 7 show that addicts treated for cannabis use recorded the highest percentages, estimated at 32.72 % in 2022 compared with 26.79 % in 2015, reflecting a relatively upward trend that may be linked to the availability of this substance, its low cost and the ease of trading it, as well as the low level of social deterrence compared with other drugs.

Addicts who underwent treatment for the use of psychotropic substances showed a fluctuating trend: the rate peaked in 2017 at 30.57 %, then reached its lowest level in 2020 at 16.50 %, before rising again to 25 % in 2022.

This fluctuation may be related to multiple factors, including changes in regulatory policies on drugs classified as psychotropic, the spread of the black market and the increasing recourse to tranquillizers and stimulants in contexts of psychological and social stress.

The poly-addiction category recorded high and worrying percentages in most years—particularly in 2020 when it reached 42.81 % reflecting a qualitative shift in addictive behaviour involving the use of more than one drug at the same time.

This situation indicates an advanced level of addiction, requiring specialised and multi-dimensional therapeutic interventions.

The category classified as “other cases” showed an upward trend until 2019 before stabilising somewhat thereafter, which may indicate the emergence of new forms of drugs or the expansion of consumption to substances that are difficult to classify.

Method and Tools

The study used the descriptive method to observe and analyse the phenomenon of drug addiction in Algerian society in light of its demographic determinants, employing a dual approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods.

The analysis was based on official data issued by the National Office for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction for the period from 2012 to 2022.

Results and Discussion

Through this study the following findings were reached:

1. Escalation of trafficking and drug cases: Algeria is experiencing a worrying increase in trafficking and drug cases during the period 2012–2022.

The total number of processed cases rose from 12 109 to 96 797, representing an almost eight-fold increase over a decade.

Cases of trafficking and dealing increased by more than 690 %, while cases of possession and consumption rose by around 700 %, reflecting on the one hand the expansion of organised criminal networks and on the other the growing local consumption rates, especially among youth.

A slight upward trend was observed in illegal cultivation cases, despite their limited number, pointing to the emergence of sites requiring careful monitoring.

In the same context, the number of people involved in trafficking cases increased from 16 672 in 2012 to 113 012 in 2022, a rise of about 578 %, reflecting the transformation of the phenomenon from an individual to an organised nature.

These overall indicators point to a dangerous shift in the structure of drug-related crime, requiring strengthening preventive mechanisms, intensifying awareness and social support efforts, in addition to supporting security and judicial capacities and developing the statistical monitoring system to make effective decisions and formulate comprehensive policies in combating trafficking and drugs.

2. Youth as the most affected age group: Data show that the age group most affected by this phenomenon ranges between 16 and 35 years.

This age group accounts for more than 65 % of all addicts in most years, confirming that youth are the group most at risk.

Cases of addiction among children under 15 are increasing from year to year, indicating early exposure of adolescents to drugs in Algeria due to the negative influence of the environment, such as family and street.

3. Gender disparities: By sex, males are the majority of addicts, representing more than 90 % of recorded cases, although recent years have seen a gradual increase in the proportion of female addicts, explained in light of changes in the status of Algerian women in society owing to changes in their social, cultural and economic roles.

These transformations, along with increased psychological and social pressures, have contributed to exposing weaknesses in both social protection systems and familial and institutional support mechanisms, making some female groups more vulnerable to engaging in addictive behaviours.

4. Marital status: Unmarried individuals (singles, divorced, widowed, separated) constitute the group most exposed to addiction, accounting for more than 70 % of the total cases.

However, recording cases among married individuals shows that the institution of marriage no longer always plays a protective role as assumed; it may be an additional source of stress and conflict in some cases, especially in light of weak marital relationships and lack of family support mechanisms.

5. Occupational status: Statistics show that the unemployed represent the largest proportion of addicts, ranging between 55 % and 65 % annually, confirming the close relationship between drug addiction and unemployment.

This correlation is attributed to the psychological state of the unemployed and their feelings of marginalisation and social exclusion, in addition to the absence of job opportunities and psychological and social support.

Cases of addiction were also recorded among students, workers and employees, indicating that the phenomenon is spreading among different segments of society without exception.

6. Type of substance: Cannabis remains the most traded substance, accounting for nearly 50 % of the seized materials in most years.

However, what is noticeable is the large increase in the use of psychotropic substances and hallucinogens in recent years, which have spread worryingly among adolescents, students and even some girls.

This expansion is attributed to the ease of obtaining them from the parallel market and to the ignorance of many about their dangers.

The rise in addiction rates in Algeria can be explained by weak institutional coordination between the various sectors concerned (health, education, socialisation institutions and the media), and the absence of a comprehensive national plan based on early prevention, psychological care and social reintegration of addicts.

The exacerbation of the phenomenon has also been influenced by the declining role of the family and educational institutions in raising awareness, and the declining influence of religious and media discourse in guidance.

The increase in consumption among children and females, and its spread in educational, professional and family environments, reveals deep transformations in the Algerian social structure, where drugs have come to play a substitute role in facing psychological crises and achieving what is believed to be a “false balance” amid weak social protection.

Conclusion

In light of the data analysed, it appears that the phenomenon of drug addiction in Algeria has witnessed a worrying quantitative and qualitative expansion over the last decade, manifested in the rise in the number of recorded cases and persons involved and in the broadening base of addicts to include various age and social groups.

Demographic analysis showed that young male unemployed singles remain the most vulnerable groups to drug addiction, while indicators emerged showing increasing addiction rates among females, children and students.

This reflects an imbalance in the social protection system and a decline in the effectiveness of socialisation channels.

The data also revealed shifts in the types of drugs consumed, with the emergence of synthetic drugs and psychotropic substances as more traded substances, along with the phenomenon of poly-addiction which heralds a more complicated therapeutic situation and care challenges.

The results also showed that addiction cannot be understood in isolation from factors such as unemployment, marginalisation, weak family cohesion and the gap in guidance within educational institutions.

Finally, this study confirms the urgent need to adopt a comprehensive, multi-dimensional approach to confront the phenomenon, based on strengthening early prevention, intensifying targeted awareness campaigns, and improving psychological and social care services, in addition to activating coordination mechanisms between different sectors (health, education, security, media) and restoring the role of the family, school and civil society in protecting individuals from the risks of addiction.

Ensuring the effectiveness of interventions requires adopting an integrated national policy based on accurate scientific data and a developmental vision that places the individual at the centre of its priorities.

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