

## *English Summary*

### *Astrid Skretting: Hvor farlig er farlige stoffer? (How dangerous are dangerous drugs?)*

In 1968 a nation-wide survey was conducted on the Norwegian population's knowledge of various substances and their attitude towards them. A similar survey was carried out in 1989. What changes were found in Norwegians' conceptions concerning different drugs? Questions about what substance would cause the most concern if an 18-year-old for whom one has strong affection had started to use it, served as one measure of people's conception of the degree of danger. Another measure was the question: What substances are perceived to be most addictive?

In 1968, LSD was ranked, on average, as the substance causing the most concern, followed by cannabis, with morphine only third. There was a wide gap to the next substances, stimulants and alcohol. Tobacco was clearly evaluated as being the least dangerous substance.

In 1989, heroin was ranked as the substance which would be considered the most dangerous, followed by cocaine and amphetamines. There was a gap after these substances; then came cannabis and, after a new distinct gap, sedatives and alcohol. As in 1968, tobacco was ranked as being the least dangerous substance.

As regards dependence, in 1968 only 4% thought that no one who smoked cannabis once a day for a month

would become addicted, and as many as 21% thought that everyone who did so would become addicted. The average estimate was that 60% would become addicted to cannabis. In the case of morphine, 7% thought that no one who had injected morphine once a day for a month would become addicted. The average guess was that 50% would become addicted to morphine. About one in five respondents thought that no one would become addicted to alcohol, tobacco or sleeping pills. Alcohol was considered to be the least addictive substance.

In 1989 the picture had changed considerably. All drugs mentioned were considered dangerous, as very few considered that no one would become addicted. Heroin, cocaine and amphetamines are considered to be the most addictive. On average, the sample assumed that 80% would become addicted to heroin, 73% to cocaine, 70% to amphetamines and 55% to cannabis. As in 1968, alcohol was assessed as being the least addictive substance.

Marked changes have taken place in the Norwegian population's assessment of the ability of the different drugs to cause addiction. The relatively dramatic change may reflect on the one hand, that people's conceptions are influenced by public debate. On the other hand, the change may also be interpreted as expressing a general increase in people's awareness of the overall danger of drugs.