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NOTE TO EDITORS

These results will be presented today (Tuesday, February 20, 2001) at a meeting of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Stockholm, and are now being simultaneously released in the 30 participating European countries and in the United States.

Headline

A multi-national study of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use released today finds important differences between high school students in 30 European countries and in the United States. The findings suggest that cigarette smoking and alcohol use is less prevalent among 10th grade students in the United States than in almost all European countries. The lifetime use of marijuana and other illicit drugs in the United States is higher than in any European country.

The study

The *European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Drugs* (ESPAD) is a coordinated set of school surveys, coordinated by sociologist Bjorn Hibell at the Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and other Drugs. This second ESPAD study was conducted in 1999 among approximately 95,000 students in 10th grade in the 30 participating countries. The survey in each country is representative of the national 10th grade student population, with the exception of the survey in Russia being representative of the capital of Moscow. The 1999 ESPAD report is available upon request (362 pages).

Comparison with the United States

The *Monitoring the Future* (MTF) study has been conducted at the University of Michigan for the past 26 years under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Drug Abuse. In 1999, this nationally representative study elicited information on tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug use among 14,000 10th grade students in the United States. The European ESPAD study was specifically developed to be comparable to the MTF study in the United States. The principal investigator of the American study, social psychologist Lloyd Johnston, states, "Having survey data which can be meaningfully compared across countries is very rare in the substance abuse field. ESPAD is by far the largest such undertaking to date, and I believe it will prove very valuable both to policy makers and scientists in a great many countries."

Key findings

- **Cigarette smoking in past 30 days.** The MTF study finds that 26% of 10th grade students in the United States had smoked at least one cigarette in the past 30 days. The ESPAD survey finds that an average of 37% of 10th grade students in the 30 participating European countries had smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days (39% in Northern Europe, 33% in Southern Europe and 38% in Eastern Europe) This proportion varies among European countries from 16% in Cyprus to 67% in the Greenland. Cyprus and Romania were the only European countries that had a lower 30-day rate of cigarette smoking than did the United States. (See Figure 1 and Figure 2 for details).
- **Alcohol use in past 30 days.** The MTF study finds that 40% of 10th grade students in the United States had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days. The ESPAD survey finds that an average of 61% of 10th grade students in the 30 participating European countries had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days (62% in Northern Europe, 63% in Southern Europe and 58% in Eastern Europe). This proportion varies among European countries from 36% in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to 85% in Denmark. FYROM was the only European country that had a lower rate than the United States. (See Figure 3 and Figure 4 for details).

- **Lifetime use of marijuana/cannabis.** The MTF study finds that in 1999 41% of 10th grade students in the United States had used marijuana or cannabis in their lifetimes. The ESPAD survey finds that an average of 17% of 10th grade students in the 30 participating European countries had ever used marijuana or cannabis (19% in Northern Europe, 14% in Southern Europe and 16% in Eastern Europe) This proportion varies among European countries from 1% in Romania to 35% in the Czech Republic, France and the United Kingdom. All the participating European countries had a lower rate of lifetime cannabis use than did the United States. (See Figure 5 and Figure 6 for details).
- **Use of any illicit drug other than marijuana.** The MTF study finds that 23% of 10th grade students in the United States had some illicit drug other than marijuana in their lifetimes. The ESPAD survey finds that an average of 6% of 10th grade students in the 30 participating European countries had used some illicit drug other than marijuana in their lifetimes (6% in Northern Europe, 5% in Southern Europe, and 7% in Eastern Europe). This proportion varies among European countries from 2% in Cyprus and Finland to 12% in the United Kingdom. All the participating European countries had a lower rate of lifetime use of illicit drugs other than marijuana than did the United States. (See Figure 7 and Figure 8 for details).
- **Lifetime use of specific illicit drugs other than marijuana.** The MTF study finds that 16% of 10th grade students in the United States have used amphetamines, 10% have used LSD or other hallucinogens, 8% have used cocaine, 6% have used ecstasy, and 4% have used crack. The ESPAD survey finds the corresponding average figures for 10th grade students in the participating countries to be 2% for amphetamines, 2% for LSD and other hallucinogens, 1% for cocaine, 1% for ecstasy and 1% for crack. The highest European rates of amphetamine use were found to be 8% in the United Kingdom and 7% in both Estonia and Poland. The highest European rates of hallucinogen use were found to be 5% in the United Kingdom, Ireland and the Czech Republic, and 4% in Moscow. The highest European rates of cocaine use were found to be 3% in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The highest European rates of ecstasy use were found to be 6% in Latvia and 5% in Ireland. The rate of crack use was found to be 2% or less in all the European countries. The proportion of students reporting having ever injected any drug was quite low in all countries. The only countries with a rate of drug injection over 1% were Russia (2%) and the United States (3%).

Further information

Further information on the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Drugs will be provided by *Thor Bjarnason*. Thor Bjarnason is Assistant Professor of Sociology at SUNY-Albany and Research Fellow at the Icelandic Center for Social Research and Analysis in Reykjavik, Iceland. He is the principal investigator of the Icelandic ESPAD survey, member of the steering board of the ESPAD project from 1993, and co-author of the 1999 ESPAD report.

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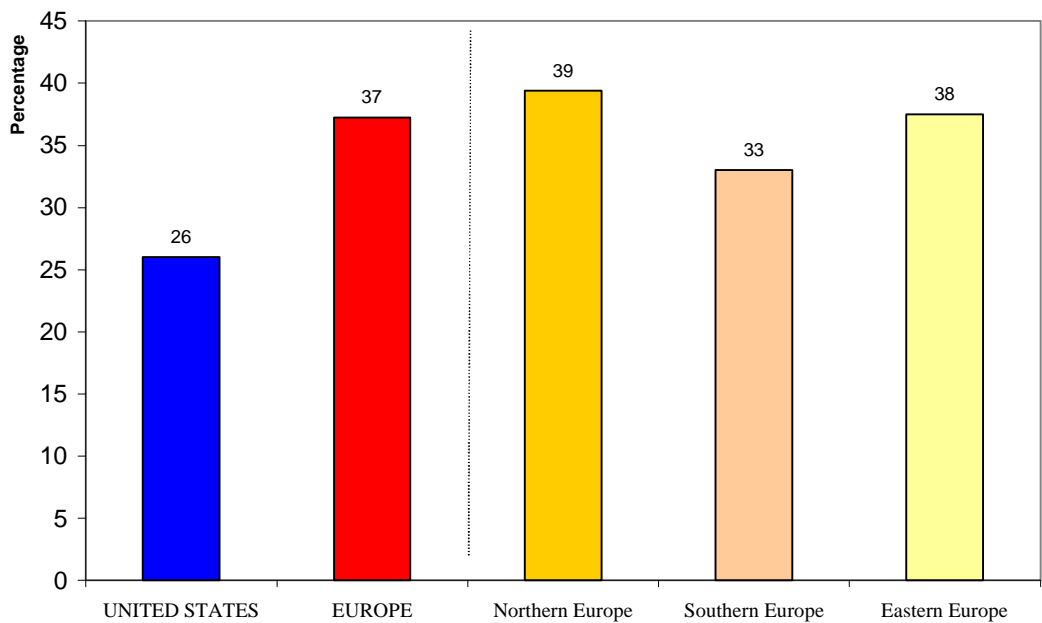


Figure 1
Proportion of 10th grade students
who report smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days
by region

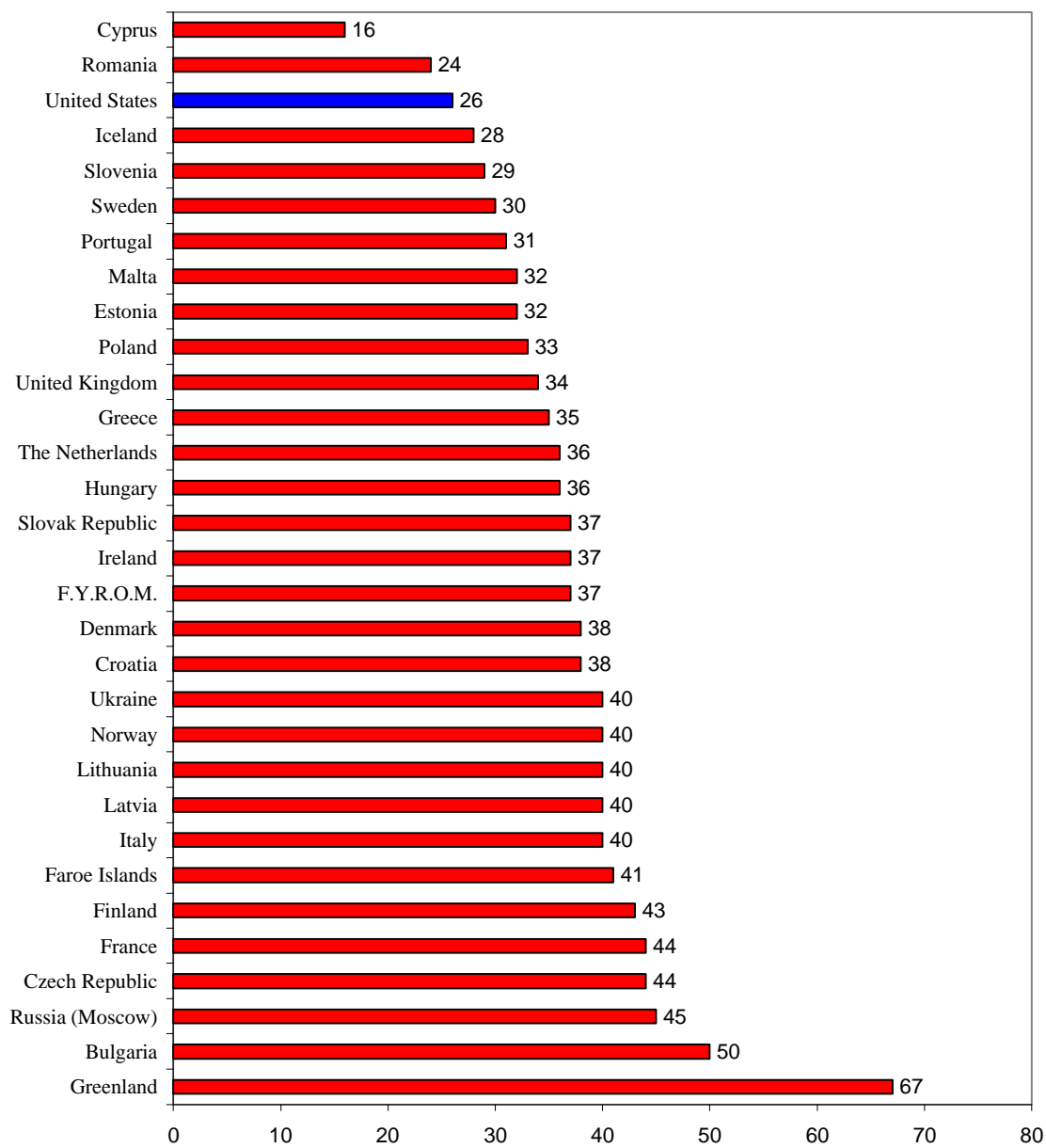


Figure 2
Proportion of 10th grade students
who report smoking cigarettes in past 30 days
by country

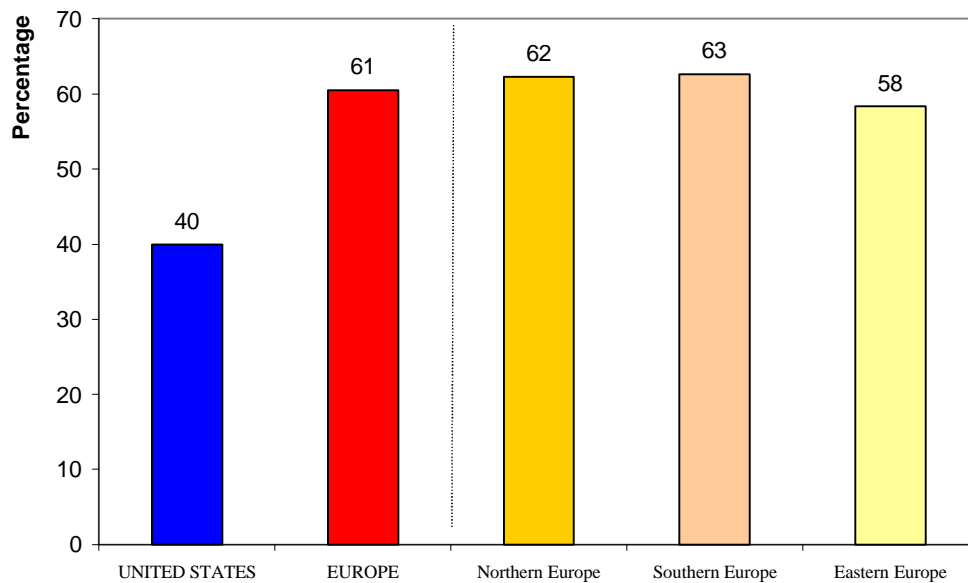


Figure 3
Proportion of 10th grade students
who report any alcohol consumption in the past 30 days
by region

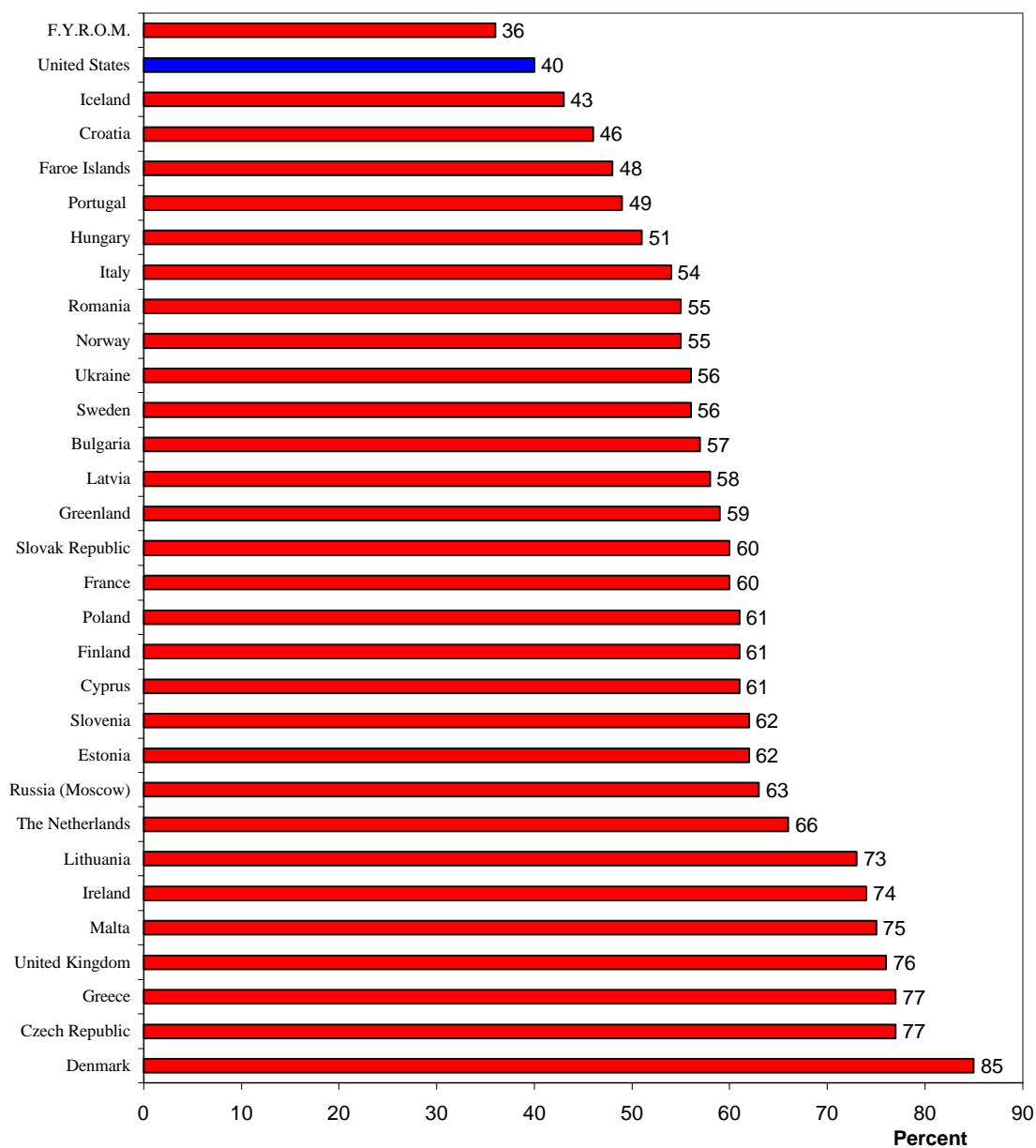


Figure 4
Proportion of 10th grade students
who report any alcohol consumption in past 30 days
by country

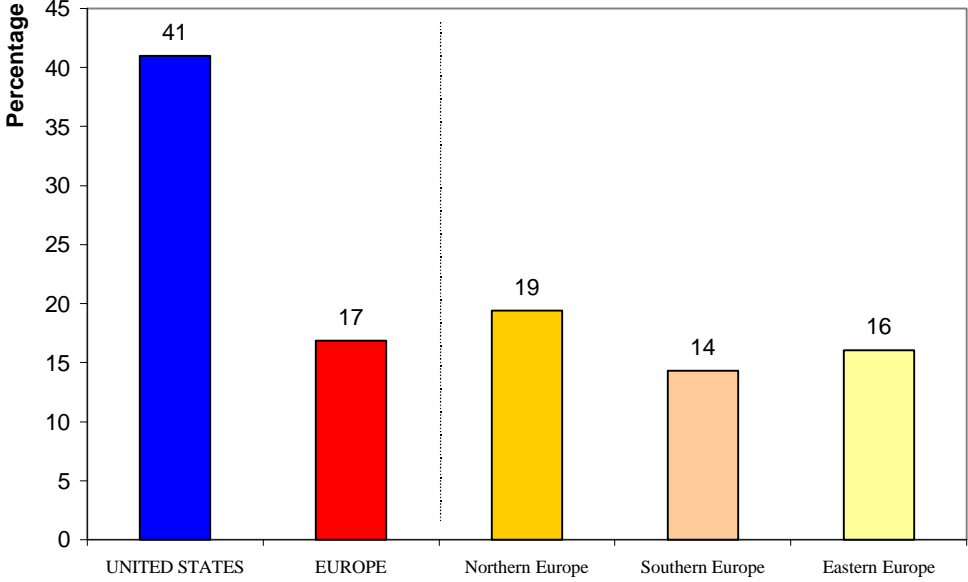


Figure 5
Proportion of 10th grade students
who report ever having used marijuana/cannabis
by region

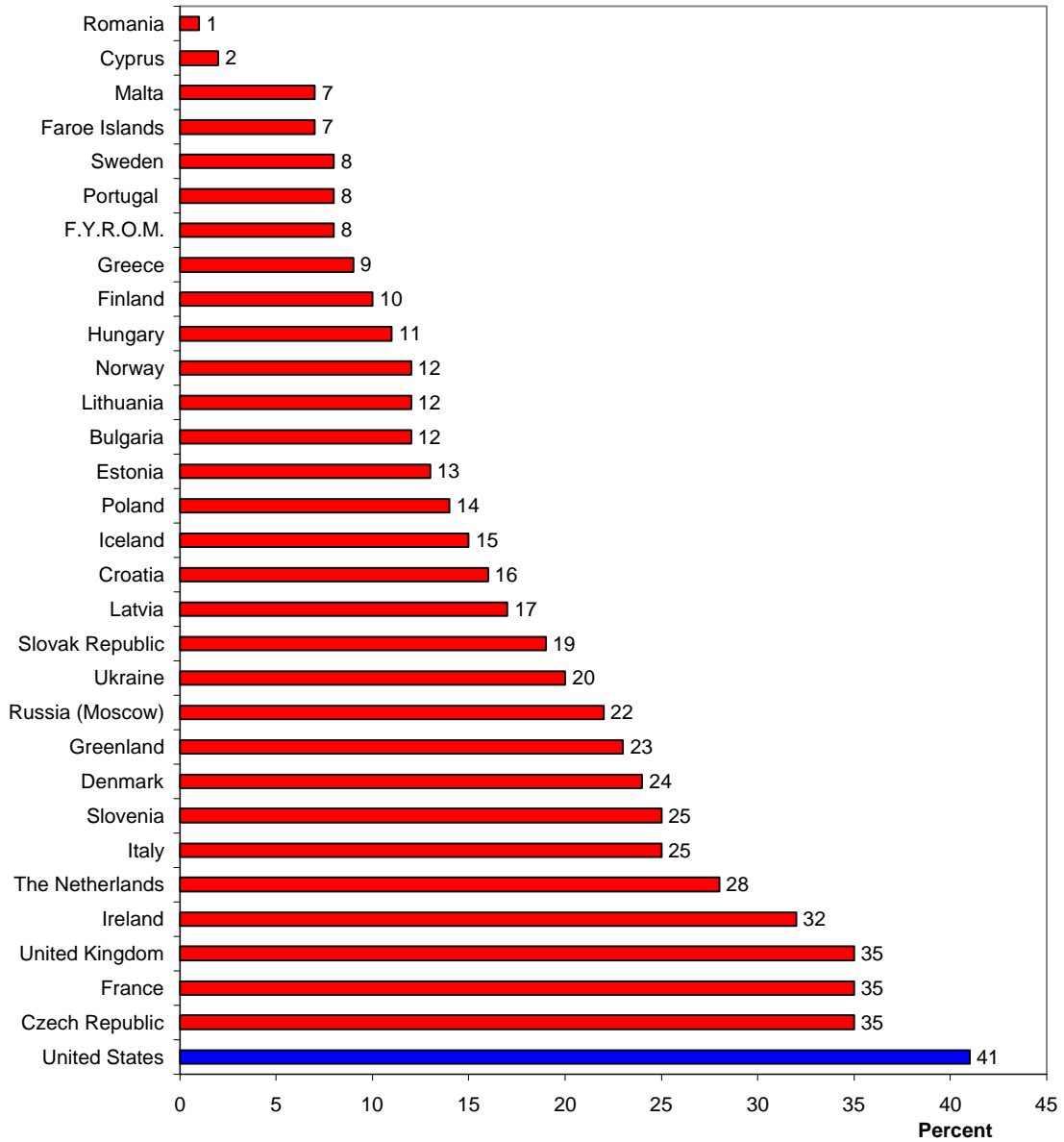


Figure 6
Proportion of 10th grade students
who report ever having used marijuana/cannabis
by country

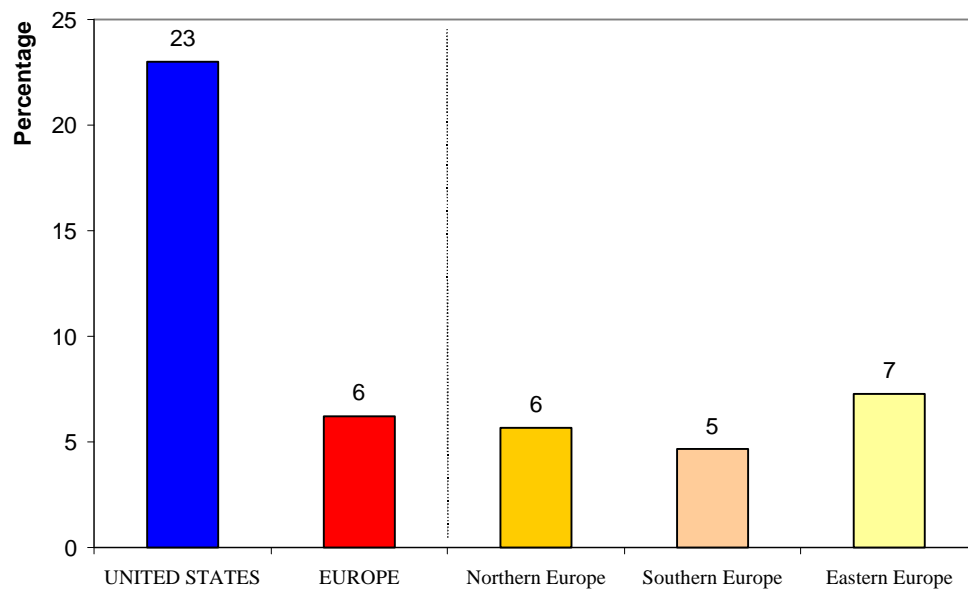


Figure 7
Proportion of 10th grade students who have used
any illicit drug other than marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime
by region

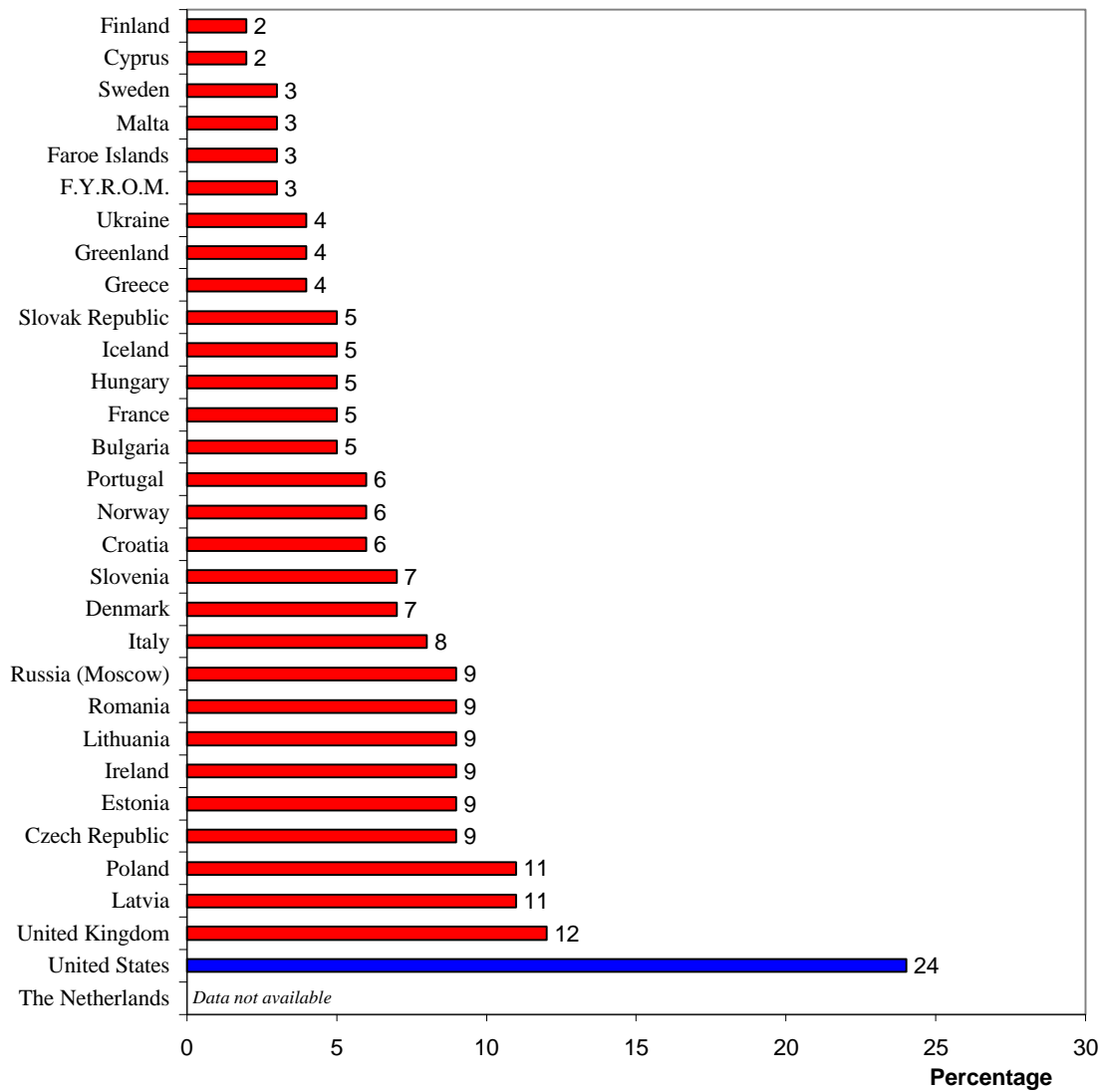


Figure 8
Proportion of 10th grade students who have used
any illicit drug other than marijuana/cannabis in their lifetime
by country