

# SURVEY OF BIOCIDAL DESINFECTANT USE IN BELGIUM 2022

## SYNTHESIS

### Context and Goals

Following the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent widespread use of disinfectant biocidal products by the general public, numerous incident reports were received by the Poison Control Centre.

The Federal Public Service for Public Health, Food Chain Safety and the Environment wanted to analyse and understand how the general public uses disinfectant biocidal products. Three types of disinfectants were included in the survey : disinfection of the skin and scalp (PT01), disinfection of surfaces not in contact with food or feed (PT02) and disinfection of surfaces in contact with food or feed (PT04).

Specifically, the objectives of the study were to highlight, among other things, the following elements: the habits of use of these types of products, the product use presenting higher risks, the handling of the instructions of use, the purchasing processes, the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Methodology

Within the framework of this study, 2,025 Belgians were surveyed in a semi-closed structured questionnaire in the spring of 2022. The methodology was mixed: 1,525 surveys were carried out over the internet and 500 by telephone. The sample was adjusted to ensure that it was representative of the national population in terms of age, gender, province, level of education and degree of urbanisation. The maximum margin of error (i.e. for an observed frequency of 50%) for this study is +/-2.178% for the total sample.

### Main results

Biocidal products are widely used by the Belgian population: in the last 12 months, 66% of the respondents used PT01, 67% used PT02 and 44% used PT04 (by their own initiative, a habit or choice).

The Covid-19 pandemic had a clear impact on the use of disinfectants: the frequency of use has been significantly higher since the crisis, and it is also a major reason for their use (top 3 reasons given for using this type of product).

However, there are several instances of inappropriate attitudes and lack of knowledge concerning this type of product that can increase the risks for health and the environment and reduce the product efficacy. With regard to PT01 products, 54% of respondents (n=2,025) are not aware of the contact time required for effective disinfection or the expiry date of the product, 36% mistakenly think that PT01s have cleaning properties, 4% have already mixed the disinfectant with another product.

With regard to PT02 and PT04, we also note inappropriate attitudes in terms of knowledge of and compliance with the expiry date, and compliance with instructions for dilution or rinsing of surfaces after use (PT04), or the correct waste management (packaging and product residues).

One of the main reasons for non-compliance with instructions for use and safety is that the information on the packaging is not read. In reality, 5% to 8% of the participants (depending on the type of product) think that the information is not very clear or not clear at all, mostly because of 2 reasons : poor readability (too small fonts, too much information, bad contrast between text and background) and the terminology (difficult to understand, language that is 'too scientific'). It should be noted that 16% of respondents have encountered problems that can often be explained by incorrect use of this type of product.