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TATTOOS IN EUROPE: EPIDEMIOLOGY AND THE BUSINESS OF TATTOOING

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In 1974, the first professional French tattooist C. Bruno wrote a book, entitled 'Tatoués, qui êtes-vous?', depicting his experience as a tattooist in the picturesque Pigalle tourist district of Paris. However, we have come a long way since then. Tattooing has gained tremendous visibility, notoriety and popularity in Western countries. In Germany, 8.5% of the population (aged between 14 and 90 years) has a tattoo. Similar trends have been found in France, Finland and Australia, where approximately 10% of the populations have at least one tattoo. However, the overall tattoo prevalences overseas and in Europe are even higher, especially among the youth, for whom it is up to 15–25% according to the country. Much has been written about the tattooed and tattooists. However, who are they currently? What motivates them to get tattooed and give tattoos? How do they see themselves? Why do some individuals remove their tattoos? Is there a 'profile' of the tattooed? Are they really 'risk takers'? And how do the non-tattooed perceive them? Through a critical review of the literature, we will reconsider tattooing from an epidemiological aspect, challenge current beliefs and explore new insights into the motivations and fears of tattoo artists and their clients.