

For discussion on
5 April 2013

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON SECURITY**

Drug situation in Hong Kong in 2012

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the drug situation in Hong Kong in 2012, including the latest statistics of 2012 reported to the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) and the findings of the 2011/12 Survey of Drug Use among Students (the Student Survey), and reports on the latest progress of the Government's anti-drug efforts and the way forward in response to the drug trends.

BACKGROUND

2. The CRDA is a voluntary reporting system which only records drug abusers who have come into contact with and have been reported by its reporting agencies, including law enforcement departments, treatment and welfare agencies, tertiary institutions, hospitals and clinics. Although CRDA does not measure the exact size of the drug abusing population in Hong Kong at any particular time, statistics derived from the CRDA are indicators of the trends of drug abuse over time. A summary of key findings is enclosed at Annex A.

3. The Narcotics Division (ND) of the Security Bureau also conducts regular student surveys to keep track of the drug abuse situation among students in Hong Kong. Since 1987, such surveys have been conducted.

4. In response to the aggravating problem of youth drug abuse, the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (Task Force) promulgated in November 2008 a reinvigorated and comprehensive long-term strategy with over 70 recommendations on initiatives along the five-pronged strategy of preventive education and publicity, treatment and rehabilitation, legislation and law enforcement, external cooperation and research. Since then, with the advice of the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN), ND formulates and co-ordinates policies and measures of various bureaux and departments, public

sector agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholder groups in the community to combat drug abuse problem and implement the five-pronged anti-drug strategy. We are also responsible for administering the Beat Drugs Fund with a capital base of \$3.35 billion to provide funding support to worthwhile anti-drug projects and measures.

5. Efforts over the past few years have brought noticeable improvements in the drug scene, with a decline in the number of reported drug abusers as well as newly reported abusers. Although it is encouraging to see continued improvements in the local drug situation, the Government would not slacken its anti-drug efforts and will continue to closely monitor drug trends, adopt relevant measures and enhance publicity efforts to address the drug problems.

2012 CRDA FIGURES

6. In 2012, there was continued improvement in the drug abuse situation, reflected in various indicators. The total number of reported drug abusers was 10 939, 5% lower than that of 2011 (11 554). The number of reported young drug abusers aged under 21 decreased by 21% (from 2 024 to 1 591). Compared with 2011, the average age of young drug abusers aged under 21 and average age of first abuse remained at 18 and 15 respectively. As for all drug abusers, their average age increased from 35 to 36 and their average age of first abuse remained at 18.

7. In addition, the number of newly reported drug abusers (2 849) was 13% lower than that of 2011 (3 257). Among them, those aged under 21 decreased by 20% (from 1 245 to 993) and those aged 21 & over decreased by 8% (from 2 012 to 1 856). The decline in young abusers was particularly noticeable. Between 2008 and 2012, the number of drug abusers aged under 21 had declined by 54%, compared with 23% among all drug abusers.

8. There is, however, a cause for concern. Half of the newly reported abusers had abused drugs for at least 4.0 years compared with 3.5 years in 2011. The same figure was 1.9 years in 2008. This is a source of concern since the rapid increase in the drug age of first-time reported drug abusers had more than doubled over five years.

9. On the localities of taking drugs, 51% of the drug abusers were reported to have taken drugs at home/friends' home only, another 30% at both

home/friends' home and other localities, and the remaining 19% at other localities only. Among those young drug abusers aged under 21, the three most popular categories of localities to abuse drugs were home/friends' home (77%), public areas like recreation area/public garden/public toilet (32%) and disco/karaoke (14%).

THE 2011/12 SURVEY OF DRUG USE AMONG STUDENTS

10. The 2011/12 Survey of Drug Use Among Students sampled some 156 000 full-time students ranging from upper primary to post-secondary levels from 237 schools / institutions over the period of October 2011 to June 2012. This represents about 20% of the target student population of 793 000 from 1 150 schools / institutions. A summary of key findings (Chapter Five) can be found at Annex B. (The full report of the 2011/12 survey is available at http://www.nd.gov.hk/en/survey_of_drug_use_11-12.htm.)

Findings

11. The 2011/12 survey continues to reaffirm the general observations on the youth drug abuse situation as revealed by the CRDA and corroborates the trends and features identified in our continuous monitoring system. First, it reaffirms the downward trend of drug-taking among students with a drop in both prevalence rate and the number of drug takers across all education levels when compared with 2008/09, when the last survey was conducted.

	Prevalence Rate in 2008/09	Prevalence Rate in 2011/12	No. of drug takers in 2008/09	No. of drug takers in 2011/12	Percentage Change
Lifetime¹	3.7%	2.2%	30 200	17 500	- 42%
One-year²	2.0%	0.7%	16 700	5 800	- 65%
30-day³	1.2%	0.5%	9 500	4 100	- 56%

¹ "Lifetime drug-taking students" refer to students who had ever taken drugs at least once in their lifetime.

² "1-year drug-taking students" refer to students who had ever taken drugs within one year preceding survey enumeration.

³ "30-day drug taking students" refer to students who had ever taken drugs within 30 days preceding survey enumeration.

12. As with the 2008/09 survey, the 2011/12 survey reveals that 99% of secondary schools have at least one lifetime abuser. Schools reporting 30-day abusers have however reduced from 90% to 82%. In addition, the proportion of first drug-taking age being 10 or below has dropped from 14% in 2008/09 to 11% in 2011/12 amongst lifetime abusers of secondary or above level.

13. The 2011/12 survey also shows a general fall in psychotropic substance abuse among students since the last survey in 2008/09. However, the trend of hidden youth drug abuse continues to develop as about 50% of drug-taking students took drugs at home and homes of friends (same for last survey); the proportion of drug-taking students (secondary level or above) taking drugs “alone” increased from 15% in 2008/09 to 21% in 2011/12; and 78% of drug-taking students never sought help. Friends continue to be the most popular source of drugs and companions of drug abuse, while the most popular ways of obtaining drugs for drug-taking students (secondary level or above) are free of charge (45%); pocket money (34%); compensated dating (19%); and other illegal means (21%).

14. The 2011/12 survey found that more non-drug taking students take part in anti-drug activities (70%), which is significantly higher than 48% reported in 2008/09. Students are also more aware of the harmful effects of drugs as the non-drug taking students of secondary schools and tertiary institutes believed that taking drugs would affect health (98%, compared with 95% in 2008/09), appearance (95%, compared with 92% in 2008/09) and studies (92%, compared with 90% in 2008/09).

THE WAY FORWARD

15. The concerted efforts of the Government, the anti-drug sector and the community in the past few years have resulted in noticeable improvements in the drug abuse situation, particularly among young drug abusers. The downward trend in reported drug users and the more phenomenal fall among young drug abusers aged below 21 testify to the effectiveness of the strategy and measures initiated on different fronts to tackle the drug problem.

16. Findings of the 2011/12 survey further corroborate the significant improvement in youth drug abuse situation as revealed in the CRDA statistics, with an obvious reduction in both the prevalence rate and real number of drug-abusing students across all education levels; and a substantial reduction in the reported young drug abusers aged under 21. The substantial decline in the

number of drug population in schools also reaffirms the effectiveness of preventive education and publicity targeting young people over the past few years.

17. All these suggest a case to sustain to take forward initiatives which have been in place to maintain the momentum. ND will continue to adopt the five-pronged strategy in combating drug abuse and take forward further initiatives to build on achievements so far. However, the developing trend of hidden youth drug abuse calls for more intensive efforts, in addition to measures already in place. We would also strengthen efforts in community and parent education to prevent young people from falling prey to drugs and to facilitate early identification of those with drug problems.

Preventive Education and Publicity

18. In fighting against drug abuse, it is necessary for the whole community to work hand-in-hand to make it a success. Since 2010, we have been organising various publicity and media programmes with the overarching theme “Stand Firm! Knock drugs out!” to strengthen the resistance of the general public and young people as our primary target to the temptation of drugs, and empower them to help others stand firm against drugs.

19. Initiatives including large-scale anti-drug events and projects to disseminate anti-drug messages to young people, exploiting new media, including the internet (e.g. through online drama and interactive webpages) to reach young people, including at-risk youth with anti-drug messages will continue. There will continue to be efforts to reach young people, parents and members of the public through talks and programmes supported by the Beat Drugs Fund.

20. The challenges posed by hidden drug abuse calls for continued focus in encouraging drug abusers to seek help early and promoting early identification of those with drug problems. The enhancement of the “186 186” 24-hour telephone hotline service⁴ as a mean for drug abusers, or their parents or neighbours to seek help has seen some early success in providing an alternative channel to those with drug problems. Two APIs, one targeting drug abusers and the other targeting parents, teachers and neighbours, were produced to encouraging them to seek help from the hotline. The increasing difficulty in identifying hidden drug abusers as indicated in the CRDA findings suggests that

⁴ We had in June 2012 enhanced the “186 186” anti-drug telephone service to become a 24-hour hotline with professional support of social workers.

the wider community, in particular parents should play a more active role in early identification of drug abusers for provision of early assistance and intervention, hence room to continue to promote the service and foster more awareness of the service.

21. In respect of preventive work, parents play a pivotal role in the upbringing of their children. For children with drug problems, parents should be best placed to notice problems and unusual behaviour early. This highlights the importance of promoting parental awareness. Understanding that many working parents have long working hours, we have been funding NGOs to run parent talks in different regions, and have organised a series of lunchtime parent talks for working parents at the Hong Kong Jockey Club Drug InfoCentre to help to enrich parents' anti-drug knowledge and enhance their skills in early identification and intervention. The initiatives will continue and we will extend such programme, inviting district fight crime committees, parent-teacher associations and members of their networks to join these sessions.

22. Separately, the Beat Drugs Fund also supported various worthwhile projects targeting parents, covering anti-drug parent seminars, publication of anti-drug resource kits for parents, leaflets and quarterly publications for parents on updated drug information, as well as prevention, early identification and intervention skills. The Beat Drugs Fund should continue to encourage worthwhile parent and community education programmes.

23. Schools are at the forefront of our battle against youth drug abuse. It is hence important to adequately equip teachers in efforts to foster a drug-free culture in schools. We will continue to provide anti-drug teacher training, as well as drug education programmes tailor-made for students.

Healthy School Programme with a Drug Testing Component (HSP(DT))

24. Apart from training for teachers, it is also important to foster a drug-free culture in schools in a holistic manner. HSP(DT) represents such an approach to tackling the youth drug abuse problem. It is a school-based preventive education programme, comprising diversified personal growth and a voluntary drug testing component. Programmes may also be tailored to meet the needs of different target groups, including high-risk students, parents, and teachers. The voluntary drug testing component, as a key element of this preventive education initiative, is intended to provide an appropriate context for commitment education for students.

25. In the 2012/13 school year, 53 schools, partnering with 14 NGOs, implemented HSP(DT). As a sustaining preventive education initiative at schools, HSP(DT) is not an one-off measure. With the aim of progressively rolling out HSP(DT) to more secondary schools, we will continue our annual evaluation of the operations of HSP(DT) and refine details to ensure smooth operation. Improvement measures have been put in place in response to the feedback collected from previous evaluation exercises.

Treatment and Rehabilitation

26. The substantial lengthening of the drug history of newly reported drug abusers and severe health impact which is often associated with prolonged drug abuse render it important to continue to closely involve other sectors, such as the medical services sector, in the treatment and rehabilitation of drug abusers, hence calling for better co-ordination among various service modes and across sectors. As the central co-ordinator, ND has to spearhead efforts across Government bureaux/departments, the public sector (e.g. the Hospital Authority) and NGOs to enhance cross-sector collaboration, promote new and effective programmes, and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness. In this regard, ND, after extensive consultation with relevant sectors, published the “Sixth Three-year Plan on Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong”, which provides focused and strategic directions for all stakeholders involved in 2012-2014. Specifically, ND has promoted better integration of services in different sectors.

27. Moreover, the Sixth Three-year Plan has also highlighted the need to further develop educational and vocational training as a necessary means to ensuring sustained efforts in helping those who have completed drug treatment programmes to stay away from drugs. ND will therefore explore opportunities for enhancing educational and vocational training, and job replacement for the rehabilitees with the support of the anti-drug sector, education and training institutions, and the business community.

28. Regarding young drug abusers who have broken the law, a pilot project on enhanced probation service (EPS) was introduced in two Magistrates' Courts in 2009. The EPS provides more focused, structured and intensive treatment for young drug offenders aged under 21 pursuant to the Probation of Offenders Ordinance (Cap. 298). A review of the pilot project in 2012 has revealed that the EPS is more effective in deterring the young offenders from abusing drugs again. Early discharge of the probation order for rewarding good performance also serves as an effective incentive for the probationers. In view

of the positive results, we plan to extend the EPS territory-wide to all seven Magistrates' Courts for three years starting from the 2013-14 financial year.

Community-based Drug Testing (CDT)

29. Prolonged psychotropic substance abuse can bring serious, at times irreversible, harm to the health of drug abusers. On this matter, the Task Force had specifically recommended that the Government should examine whether and how a compulsory drug testing scheme might be made available in Hong Kong. The main objective of CDT is to facilitate the identification of drug abusers at an early stage so as to enable timely intervention and reduce as far as practicable the adverse health impact on veteran drug abusers. There are also voices in the community calling for the Government to look into the issue.

30. Since our last report to this Panel on 5 June 2012, the Security Bureau has been engaging in dialogue with stakeholders on the matter. Subject to the outcome of the further discussions with relevant sectors, we plan to launch the public consultation within 2013. The Government has an open mind on the proposed CDT scheme. Community consensus is a prerequisite for pursuing the scheme.

Legislation and Law Enforcement

31. Rapid changes in the drug scene nowadays with the emergence of precursor chemicals and new synthetic drugs from time to time both overseas and in Hong Kong call for increased vigilance in monitoring the latest developments and a timely response before any new drugs become an issue of concern. We will continue to co-ordinate with law enforcement agencies and relevant departments in analysing overseas and local drug trends and formulating anti-drug policies and action plans.

32. We also attach great importance to reducing drug supply at source through stopping illegal importation of dangerous drugs. In 2011, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) seized a total of 1 249 kilograms, 7.72 litres and 105 785 tablets of dangerous drugs, equivalent to about \$1.03 billion at market value. In 2012, a total of 1 588 kilograms and 21 529 tablets of dangerous drugs, at market value of \$975.4 million were seized. A total of 5 639 persons and 5 825 persons were arrested for drug-related offences in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Law enforcement agencies will continue their efforts against drug trafficking and drug abusing activities, including strengthening the patrol of targeted drug abuse

black spots and adopting various measures at land boundary control points to curb cross-boundary drug abuse.

External Cooperation

33. HKPF and C&ED have reinforced their liaison and intelligence exchange with equivalent Mainland authorities and international organisations. Joint operations are undertaken as and when appropriate. For instance, with the intelligence from the United States Drug Enforcement Agency on information of cargo shipment, C&ED made a record seizure of 649 kilograms of cocaine from a shipment of laurel wood from Ecuador in July 2012, arresting three Hong Kong persons.

Research

34. Research studies help to provide a solid foundation to facilitate the formulation of evidence-based anti-drug policies and programmes. In view of the prevalence of ketamine in Hong Kong, we have supported various research studies to examine the harmful effects of ketamine on the health of those who abuse the drug. Hong Kong is leading in this field of research and has over the past few years identified damages of ketamine to the urological system, mental health and brain functions. Such findings have helped the anti-drug sector develop various treatment methods and rehabilitative measures targeting ketamine abusers.

ADVICE SOUGHT

35. Members are invited to note the latest CRDA statistics, the 2011/12 survey results, progress of the Government's overall anti-drug efforts and the way forward.

Narcotics Division
Security Bureau
25 March 2013

**Summary of Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) Statistics
for the Whole Year of 2012**

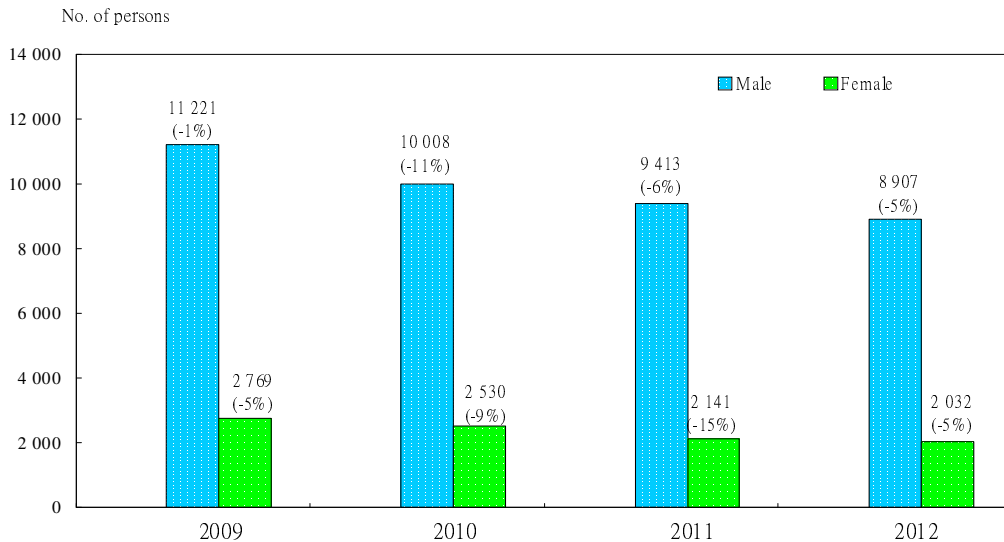
Profile of Drug Abusers

- The total number of reported drug abusers in 2012 was 10 939, 5% lower than that of 2011 (11 554).
- The number of reported young drug abusers aged under 21 decreased by 21% (from 2 024 to 1 591).
- Compared with 2011, the average age and the average age of first abuse for young drug abusers aged under 21 remained at 18 and 15 respectively. As for all drug abusers, their average age increased from 35 to 36 and their average age of first abuse remained at 18.
- The number of newly reported drug abusers (2 849) was 13% lower than that of 2011 (3 257). Among them, those aged under 21 decreased by 20% (from 1 245 to 993) and those aged 21 & over decreased by 8% (from 2 012 to 1 856).
- The total number of female abusers was 5% lower (declined from 2 141 to 2 032), while the number of male abusers was 5% lower (declined from 9 413 to 8 907).
- Half of the newly reported abusers had abused drugs for at least 4.0 years compared with 3.5 years in 2011. Among the newly reported young abusers, half of them had abused drugs for at least 1.8 years compared with 1.9 years in 2011.

Reported drug abusers by age group



Reported drug abusers by sex

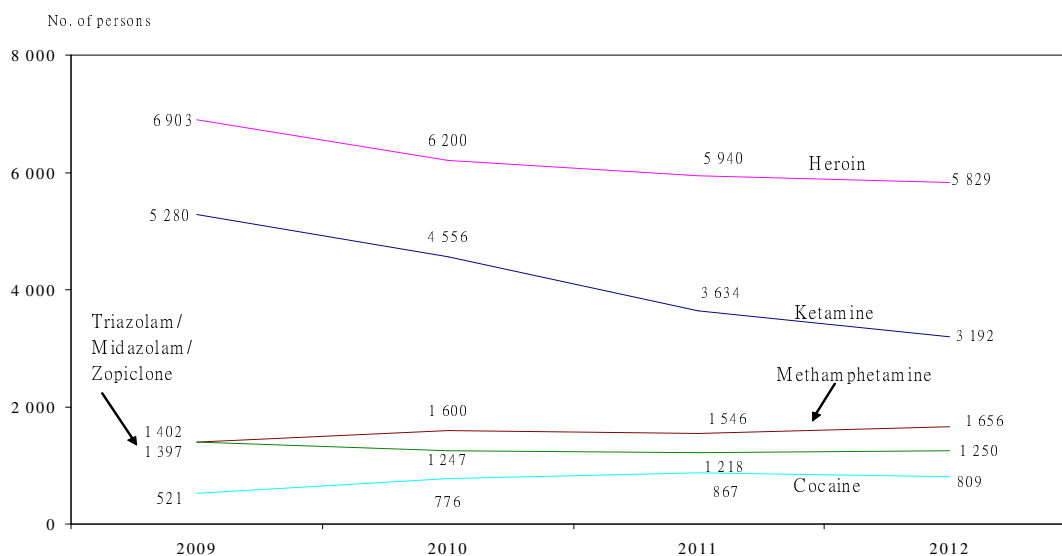
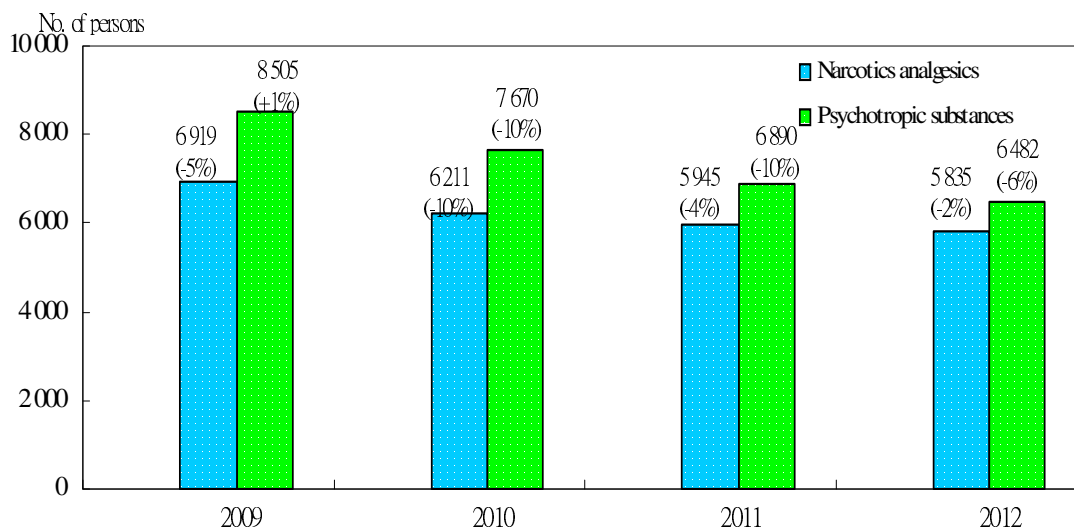


Note: More than one drug type could be reported by abusers.

Type of Drugs Abused

- In 2012, the number of reported narcotics analgesics abusers (5 835) was lower than the number of abusers taking psychotropic substance (PSAs) (6 482). Among those newly reported, the number of PSAs (2 407) was much higher than the number of narcotics analgesics abusers (459).

Reported drug abusers by drug type



Notes : (1) Figures exclude those with unknown type of drugs abused.
 (2) More than one type of drugs abused may be reported for each individual drug abuser.

- Comparing 2012 with 2011, the number of abusers taking psychotropic substances and those taking narcotics analgesics (mainly heroin) had lowered by 6% (from 6 890 to 6 482) and 2% (from 5 945 to 5 835) respectively.
- Heroin remains the most popular type of drug abused among the reported abusers. The total number of reported heroin abusers in 2012 was 2% lower than that in 2011 (from 5 940 to 5 829).
- Ketamine remains the most popular type of psychotropic substances abused. The number of reported ketamine abusers was 12% lower (from 3 634 to 3 192). 30% of them were aged under 21.

- The number of abusers of most of other types of psychotropic substances had seen a reduction - MDMA (50% lower), nimetazepam (24% lower), cannabis (16% lower), cough medicine (11% lower) and cocaine (7% lower), with the exception of methamphetamine (7% higher) and triazolam/midazolam/ zopiclone (3% higher).
- The number of drug abusers taking more than one type of drugs in 2012 was 3% lower than that in 2011 (having decreased from 2 473 to 2 405). *[Note: For an abuser taking more than one drug type, he/she would be counted more than once in analysing individual types of drugs and “multiple counts” of the same person would occur.]*

Other observations

- The most common reasons reported for taking drugs were for relief of boredom/depression/stress (49%), to identify with peers (48%) and to avoid discomfort of withdrawal (42%) .
- 51% of the drug abusers were reported to have taken drugs at home/friends’ home only, another 30% at both home/friends’ home and other localities, and the remaining 19% at other localities only. Among those young drug abusers aged under 21, the three most popular categories of localities to abuse drugs were home/friends’ home (77%), public areas like recreation area/public garden/public toilet (32%) and disco/karaoke (14%).
- Abusers of heroin and triazolam/midazolam/zopiclone had a relatively higher frequency of drug taking in general, both with a median monthly frequency of abusing drugs at 60 times. The corresponding figures for other types of PSAs were much lower, e.g. 30 times for cough medicine abusers and 10 times for ketamine abusers and 9 times for methamphetamine abusers.
- About three quarters of the reported drug abusers were previously convicted. Among them, most (34%) had previous conviction of drug-related offences only, followed by those convicted of both drug-related and other offences (30%) and those convicted of other offences only (10%).

Chapter 5

Summary of key findings

The 2011/12¹ Survey provides very useful data about the drug-taking situation among students from upper primary to post-secondary level. Several key observations are highlighted in this chapter. They generally refer to all covered students as illustration and comparisons with the previous survey (the 2008/09 Survey), unless otherwise stated or the context otherwise requires.

5.1 Downward trend of drug-taking among students

The 2011/12 Survey has denoted a remarkable drop in the prevalence of drug use among students across all education levels, in particular the taking of psychotropic drugs.

The percentage of lifetime drug-taking students dropped from 3.7% in 2008/09 to 2.2% in 2011/12; that of 1-year drug-taking from 2.0% in 2008/09 to 0.7% in 2011/12; and that of 30-day drug-taking from 1.2% in 2008/09 to 0.5% in 2011/12.

The estimated number of lifetime drug-taking students was 17 500, 42.1% drop from the last survey in 2008/09. The estimated number of 1-year drug-takers was 5 800, 65.3% drop from the last survey. The number of those who took drugs within 30-day prior to the survey were 4 100, 56.8% drop from the last survey.

The downward trend is in line with that shown in the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA)², in which the number of reported young drug abusers aged under 21 decreased consistently from 3 474 in 2008 to 2 024 in 2011³ (Chart 2.3 and Tables 1.3 - 1.5).

Among the reported 30-day drug-taking students in the 2011/12 Survey, 45.3% took drugs every day and 21.0% took drugs once in the preceding 30 days (Chart 2.1).

5.2 Psychotropic drugs predominant

Drug-taking students predominantly took psychotropic drugs and drops in number of drug-takers across all psychotropic types were noted. Meanwhile, the drug-taking rate for heroin maintained at 0.2% (Chart 2.2).

¹ Please note that “Trial Scheme on School Drug Testing in Tai Po District” has been implemented in schools since 2009/10 school year.

² CRDA is a voluntary reporting system. It records information of drug abusers who have come into contact with and been reported by reporting agencies, including law enforcement departments, treatment and welfare agencies and hospitals.

³ As background reference, a table of comparison with similar surveys in several overseas jurisdictions is at Table 5.1. The lifetime prevalence rate of drug-taking among secondary students in Hong Kong (2.3%) is far less than that in the United States (34.7%) and the United Kingdom (17.0%).

The top two most common types of drugs taken by drug-taking upper primary students continued to be “cough medicines” (38.3%) and “thinner” (15.7%) (Table 2.3).

The number of secondary students taking ketamine has recorded a remarkable decrease. The most common type of drugs among the secondary students in the 2011/12 Survey are now cannabis (42.9%) and ketamine (36.1%). Post-secondary students have the same pattern (64.2% for cannabis and 35.0% for ketamine) (Table 2.3).

5.3 Less drug-taking at young age

In the 2011/12 Survey, drug prevalence among covered students of age 12 or below was 1.3%, lower than the corresponding rate of 2.3% in the 2008/09 Survey (Table 1.3).

Proportion of lifetime drug-taking students at secondary or above levels whose first age was 10 or below dropped from 14.0% in the 2008/09 Survey to 10.7% in the 2011/12 Survey. The median age of first drug-taking also rose to 14.4 from 13.3 in 2008/09 for drug-taking students at secondary or above levels (Table 2.10).

5.4 General prevalence, demographic characteristics and other factors

The 2011/12 Survey reveals that the prevalence of drug-taking has continued to spread across various education levels from upper primary to post-secondary (though in a lesser extent as compared to the 2008/09 Survey), affecting different schools/ institutions (Section 1.4), districts (Table 2.12) and families (Table 4.11). Further analyses of the prevalence, demographic characteristics and other features may help identify risk factors for more focused anti-drug efforts.

For example, out of the 100 primary schools surveyed, lifetime drug abusers were reported in 86 schools respectively. Out of 106 secondary schools surveyed, lifetime drug abusers were reported in 105 schools. Of the 31 post-secondary institutions enumerated, 30 had lifetime drug-taking students reported (Section 1.4).

As another example, a larger proportion of drug-taking secondary or above students had a family income of less than \$6,000 (8.1%) when compared with their non-drug-taking counterparts (3.4%). A similar pattern was also observed in the high income group (i.e. family income of \$50,000 or above). The proportions of drug-taking and non-drug-taking students in this income group were 17.6% and 7.2% respectively (Table 4.12).

As another illustration, a larger proportion of drug-taking students were not living with both of their parents (12.4%) when compared with their non-drug-taking counterparts (3.8%) (Table 4.11).

The proportions of drug-taking students who were smokers (52.9%), and in particular those who were both smokers and alcohol users (49.6%), were much higher than those of their non-drug-taking counterparts (7.8% of smokers, and 7.3% of both smokers and alcohol users) (Table 4.10).

“Curiosity” was a major reason for drug-taking upper primary students (33.2%) and for drug-taking students at secondary or above levels to take drugs for the first time (55.5% for secondary and 64.1% for post-secondary). However, the 30-day secondary drug-takers took drugs mainly to “relieve boredom” (30.6%), “to get away from stress” (28.1%) and “to seek excitement” (27.6%). On the other hand, the 30-day post-secondary drug-takers took drugs mainly “to seek excitement” (24.1%), “to get away from depression/ anxiety” (22.9%) and to “relieve boredom” (21.9%) (Table 2.11).

Other factors relating to drug-taking surveyed included self-perception (Table 4.5), relationship with family, school and peers (Table 4.6), pastimes (Table 4.7-4.8) and behavioural and school problems (Table 4.9).

The youth drug problem seems complex relating to growth, family, school and other aspects.

5.5 Perceived harmfulness of taking drugs

The majority (over 90%) of non-drug-taking students at secondary level or above agreed that taking drugs will affect their health, appearance and study. Even for drug-taking students at secondary or above, such proportions were more than 70% (Table 4.2).

81.8% of non-drug-taking students at secondary level or above reported that they did not take drugs because “they were afraid of the consequences of taking drugs”, specifically they knew that “drugs were harmful to health” (71.4%) (Table 3.3). On the other hand, 58.2% of lifetime or 56.1% of 30-day drug-taking students at secondary or above reported that they had not attempted to stop taking drugs because “they did not think they had become addicted” (Table 2.15).

The result may reflect that the publicity and preventive education efforts of the Government have imparted anti-drug messages upon most students. Such efforts should be sustained in future.

5.6 Hidden nature of drug-taking among the youth

The hidden nature of drug-taking among the youth has further been substantiated in the 2011/12 Survey.

“Friends’/ schoolmates’/ neighbours’ homes” (33.3%) and students’ own “homes” (26.0%) were amongst the top three usual venues for taking drugs (Table 2.6).

The proportion of drug-taking students who took drugs “alone” increased from 14.6% in the 2008/09 Survey to 20.7% in 2011/12 Survey (Table 2.9).

77.6% of drug-taking students reported that they had never sought help from others. For those who reported having sought help from others, the persons who gave them the greatest help were reported to be “friends” (27.0%). It is worth-noting that the second top-rated persons who gave the greatest help to drug-taking students of secondary and post-secondary levels were “social workers” (14.4% for secondary and 22.0% for post-secondary); and that of upper primary level were “parents” (19.7%) (Table 2.14).

5.7 Drug-taking outside Hong Kong

While 34.3% of lifetime drug-takers had taken drugs outside Hong Kong in the 2011/12 Survey, 65.3% of those 30-day drug-takers did so. Among the latter, 71.9% had taken drugs in Mainland China/ Macao, with Shenzhen (38.4%) and Macao (28.5%) being the most common places of drug-taking outside Hong Kong; whereas 38.4% had taken drugs overseas (Table 2.13).

5.8 Accessibility of drugs

45.2% of drug-taking students in secondary or above levels claimed that the drugs they took were “free of charge”. “Pocket money” (34.0%) and “compensated dating” (19.0%) were the other two commonly reported sources of money for buying drugs (Table 2.5).

2.2% of non-drug-taking students of all education levels had been offered drugs (Table 3.1).

The most common drug suppliers were “friends” (48.3% for secondary students’ first drug-taking, 53.2% for post-secondary students’ first drug-taking and 51.5% for non-drug-taking students of all education levels), followed by “schoolmates” (28.2% for secondary students’ first drug-taking, 27.4% for post-secondary students’ first drug-taking and 25.6% for non-drug-taking students of all education levels) and “friends of friends” (15.1% for secondary students’ first drug-taking, 18.2% for post-secondary students’ first drug-taking and 28.2% for non-drug-taking students of all education levels). It is noteworthy that “drug dealers” played a more important role in supplying drugs to 30-day drug-takers at secondary or above levels (24.3% for secondary and 19.8% for post-secondary) (Tables 2.8 & 3.1).