

香港賽馬會藥物資訊天地
Hong Kong Jockey Club Drug Info Centre

A Study on Psychotropic Substance Abusers



Narcotics Division
Government Secretariat
Government of the Hong Kong
Special Administrative Region

A study of psychotropic substance
abusers



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2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

2.1 The characteristics of drug abusers taking psychotropic substances in 1997 can be summarised as follows:

- a) Cannabis, triazolam, methylamphetamine and cough medicine were the psychotropic substances commonly abused in 1997. It was found that except psychotropic substances, about 40% of drug abusers had also abused heroin. Among multiple drug abusers, more than 80% took a combination of two types of drug. The most common drugs taken in combination by these drug abusers were heroin and triazolam.
- b) The majority of drug abusers were males (84.2%) and in the age bracket 16 - 25 (53.0%). Single drug abusers were relatively younger than multiple drug abusers, with the mean age of 22.3 compared with 29.1 for the latter. As for the four groups of single drug abusers taking the major types of psychotropic substances, the mean age of organic solvent abusers (15.6) was lower than those for the other three groups (21.7 to 22.6).
- c) The majority of drug abusers were never married (81.8%) and had received lower secondary or above education (80.7%). These characteristics were more commonly found in single drug abusers when compared with multiple drug abusers.
- d) Kwun Tong was the district of residence with the greatest proportion of drug abusers, whether taking single or multiple drugs. As for the four groups of single drug abusers, the greatest proportions of drug abusers were found in different districts, including Kwun Tong, Central & Western, Tai Po and North.
- e) The majority (62.9%) of drug abusers were found to live in public and aided rental blocks. Private housing (25.6%) was the next common living quarters for drug abusers.
- f) More than half of the drug abusers were employed, either as full-time workers or casual/part-time workers. Most of them were building and construction workers, restaurant service workers or transport labourers. It was found that about two-thirds of single drug abusers were employed, as against less than half for multiple

drug abusers. Except for organic solvent abusers, the majority of those taking cannabis, methylamphetamine (ice) or cough medicine were employed (56.4% to 73.8%). It was found that some 20% of organic solvent abusers were employed and nearly half were students (47.6%).

- g) The majority of drug abusers were previously convicted. The proportion of multiple drug abusers (85.1%) having previous convictions was significantly higher than that for single drug abusers (54.5%). As regards the four groups of single drug abusers, the proportion of organic solvent abusers (26.7%) having previous convictions was much lower than those for the other three groups, ranging from 52.9% to 59.7%.
- h) The reasons for current drug use varied among multiple drug abusers. Of which, the commonly reported ones were curiosity (44.7%), avoid discomfort of its absence (43.5%) and peer influence (42.6%). For single drug abusers, their main reason for drug use was peer influence.
- i) Over 70% of drug abusers took drugs for the first time at the age below 20. Multiple drug abusers started abusing drugs at an earlier age than single drug abusers, with the mean age of first abuse at 16.5 compared with 19.4 for the latter. Compared the mean age of first abuse among the four groups of single drug abusers, it was noted that abusers taking organic solvent (13.4) tended to start abusing the drug earlier, followed by those taking cough medicine (18.7), methylamphetamine (19.1) and cannabis (20.0).
- j) In comparison, multiple drug abusers had a longer duration of drug use than single drug abusers. It was found that more than half of the multiple drug abusers had abused drugs for 10 years or more, as against less than 10% for single drug abusers.
- k) More than half (53.0%) of the drug abusers spent \$100 to \$299 on drugs per day. Comparatively, multiple drug abusers spent more money than single drug abusers. The average daily expenditure on drug abuse for the former was \$209.4 while that for the latter was \$94.2. Among the four groups of single drug abusers, the average daily expenditure for organic solvent abusers (\$8.5) was much lower than those for the other three groups, ranging from

\$56.8 to \$149.9.

- l) Multiple drug abusers had a longer reporting history than single drug abusers. It was found that more than 90% of multiple drug abusers had been reported to the CRDA more than once, in comparison with less than half (42.6%) for single drug abusers. The average length of period since the first report had been submitted for multiple drug abusers (9.2 years) was much longer than that for single drug abusers (3.3 years). As regards the four groups of single drug abusers, a longer period after the first report was observed in the abusers taking cannabis (3.5 years) or cough medicine (3.2 years) than in those taking methylamphetamine (2.4 years) or organic solvent (1.1 years).
- m) The majority (76.8%) of drug abusers had been reported by the Police. For multiple drug abusers, it was found that besides the Police (84.5%), greater proportions of them had been reported by the Correctional Services Department (CSD), methadone clinics and the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA), ranging from 41.0% to 73.8%. As regards the four groups of single drug abusers, over 90% of organic solvent abusers had been reported by the outreaching and youth services teams while most in the other three groups (58.4% to 79.0%) had been reported by the Police.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCE ABUSERS

Personal characteristics

Sex and age

3.1 The abuse of psychotropic substances was more prevalent among males. In 1997, 84.2% of the reported psychotropic substance abusers were males, as against 15.8% females. But the proportion of female substance abusers was much higher in the young age group (i.e. below the age of 21), at 23.6% in 1997.

3.2 Analysed by age, more than half (53.0%) of psychotropic substance abusers were in the age bracket 16-25. As for young female abusers, larger proportions were observed in the ages between 15 and 17, ranging from 15.9% to 18.9%.

3.3 The mean age of psychotropic substance abusers of all ages was 25.6 while that of young female abusers was 16.6.

Marital status

3.4 Over 80% of psychotropic substance abusers were never married. As for young female abusers, 94.0% of them were never married.

Educational attainment

3.5 64.3% of psychotropic substance abusers had received lower secondary education. A greater proportion (80.7%) of them had attained lower secondary or above standard.

3.6 Young female abusers were noted to have received more education, with 75.7% attaining lower secondary standard and 96.3% attaining lower secondary or above standard.