

A study on the means of financing
drug habit



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A Study on the Means of Financing Drug Habit



Narcotics Division
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BACKGROUND

Few researches have been carried out on the financing of drug habit. While piecemeal research findings based on case interviews have indicated that some drug abusers might finance their drug habit through illegal source, there is no strong evidence on the applicability of this phenomenon to the drug abuser population at large or specifically, to drug offenders.

2. In order to have a better understanding of this issue, the Narcotics Division planned in late 1994 to conduct a survey among offenders on their drug financing habit. Coincidentally, it was noted that the CSD had designed a questionnaire to collect information starting from January 1994 on inmates of the DATCs upon admission and some of the data collected could provide useful answers to the question.

3. Without duplicating the effort of data collection, the Central Registry of Drug Abuse therefore approached the CSD for extracting some data from their records for further study. The CSD consented to the request but informed that due to manpower constraints, not all DATC inmates were covered in their survey, and specifically for adult male inmates, no such data were collected.

4. In the following paragraphs, details of the study and its findings are presented.

OBJECTIVES

5. The objectives of the study are twofold :

- a) To find out the daily expenditure on drugs and source of money for financing the drug habit of CSD inmates;
- b) To find out if there is appreciable difference in the source of money for financing drug habit for CSD inmates with different daily expenditure on drugs and triad affiliation.

SUBJECTS UNDER STUDY

6. The subjects for the study cover young inmates and adult female inmates who were admitted to the DATCs during the period January 1994 to June 1995. The total number of inmates with questionnaires available for the study is 675, comprising 310 young males, 153 young females and 212 adult females. These represent 36.1%, 95.6% and 87.6% respectively for the three groups of DATC inmates under study.

DATA ITEMS FOR ANALYSIS

7. For the purpose of the study, a few data items relating to the demographic and drug abuse characteristics of the subjects and some others to fulfil the research objectives are extracted using a standard record sheet as at Annex.

FINDINGS

Age and sex (Table 1)

8. Of the young inmates (both males and females) under study, over 85% were aged between 17 and 20. Quite a number of them (9.5%) were aged 16 while only a few (3.9%) were from 14 to 15. As for the adult female inmates, about 65% were within the age group 21-30 and 28% were aged between 31-40. Only a small proportion (7.1%) of these inmates were aged over 40.

Table 1(a) : Young inmates under 21 by age and sex

Age	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
14	2	0.6	4	2.6	6	1.3
15	8	2.6	4	2.6	12	2.6
16	31	10.0	13	8.5	44	9.5
17	60	19.4	39	25.5	99	21.4
18	71	22.9	36	23.5	107	23.1
19	66	21.3	33	21.6	99	21.4
20	72	23.2	24	15.7	96	20.7
Total	310	100.0	153	100.0	463	100.0

Table 1(b) : Age Distribution of adult female inmates

Age group	Female	
	No.	%
21-25	76	35.8
26-30	62	29.2
31-35	32	15.1
36-40	27	12.7
41-45	10	4.7
46-50	2	0.9
51 & over	3	1.4
Total	212	100.0

Triad affiliation (Table 2)

9. On triad affiliation, two-thirds of the young male inmates were members of triad societies while the proportion of these persons among the young female inmates was less than 1%. As for the adult female addicts, 4.7% were found to have been affiliated to triad societies.

Table 2 : DATCs inmates by triad affiliation

Affiliation to triad societies	Young inmates aged under 21						Adult female inmates		TOTAL	
	Male		Female		Total		No.	%	No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
Triad affiliated	209	67.4	1	0.7	210	45.4	10	4.7	220	32.6
Non-triad affiliated	101	32.6	152	99.3	253	54.6	202	95.3	455	67.4
Total	310	100.0	153	100.0	463	100.0	212	100.0	675	100.0

Drug abuse pattern (Table 3)

10. Heroin was the predominant primary drug abused by over 95% of the drug addicts under study in the four weeks prior to admission to DATCs. Other primary drugs of abuse included cannabis (1.2%), cough medicine (0.4%) and methadone/physeptone (0.4%). It was found that 31.3% of the young male inmates, 8.5% of the young female inmates and 17.0% of the adult female inmates had abused more than one drug in the four weeks before detention for treatment. The secondary drugs commonly abused by the young multiple drug abusers included cannabis (6.5%), cough medicine (5.4%) and flunitrazepam (4.8%) while those abused by the adult multiple drug abusers included flunitrazepam (6.6%), midazolam (2.4%) and triazolam (1.4%).

Table 3 : DATCs inmates by drug abused

Drug of abuse	Young inmates aged under 21						Adult female inmates		TOTAL	
	Male		Female		Total		No.	%	No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
<u>Primary drug</u>										
Cannabis	5	1.6	2	1.3	7	1.5	1	0.5	8	1.2
Cough medicine	1	0.3	2	1.3	3	0.6			3	0.4
Dipipanone							1	0.5	1	0.1
Flunitrazepam	1	0.3			1	0.2	2	0.9	3	0.4
Heroin	297	95.8	148	96.7	445	96.1	206	97.2	651	96.4
Methadone/Physeptone	2	0.6	1	0.7	3	0.6			3	0.4
Methaqualone	2	0.6			2	0.4	1	0.5	3	0.4
Methylamphetamine	2	0.6			2	0.4			2	0.3
Midazolam							1	0.5	1	0.1
Total	310	100.0	153	100.0	463	100.0	212	100.0	675	100.0
<u>Secondary drug</u>										
Amphetamines	2	0.6			2	0.4			2	0.3
Cannabis	28	9.0	2	1.3	30	6.5	1	0.5	31	4.6
Chlordiazepoxide							1	0.5	1	0.1

Table 3 (Cont'd)

Drug of abuse	Young inmates aged under 21						Adult female inmates		TOTAL	
	Male		Female		Total		No.	%	No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
<u>Secondary drug</u>										
Cough medicine	24	7.7	1	0.7	25	5.4	1	0.5	26	3.9
Diazepam							1	0.5	1	0.1
Dipipanone							1	0.5	1	0.1
Flunitrazepam	17	5.5	5	3.3	22	4.8	14	6.6	36	5.3
Heroin	1	0.3			1	0.2	2	0.9	3	0.4
Methadone/Physeptone			1	0.7	1	0.2	2	0.9	3	0.4
Methaqualone	4	1.3	1	0.7	5	1.1	1	0.5	6	0.9
Methylamphetamine	3	1.0			3	0.6	2	0.9	5	0.7
Midazolam	2	0.6			2	0.4	5	2.4	7	1.0
Organic solvent	2	0.6			2	0.4			2	0.3
Triazolam	5	1.6	2	1.3	7	1.5	3	1.4	10	1.5
More than one drug	9	2.9	1	0.7	10	2.2	2	0.9	12	1.8
Have not abused secondary drugs	213	68.7	140	91.5	353	76.2	176	83.0	529	78.4
Total	310	100.0	153	100.0	463	100.0	212	100.0	675	100.0

Daily expenditure on primary drug of abuse (Table 4 and Figure 1)

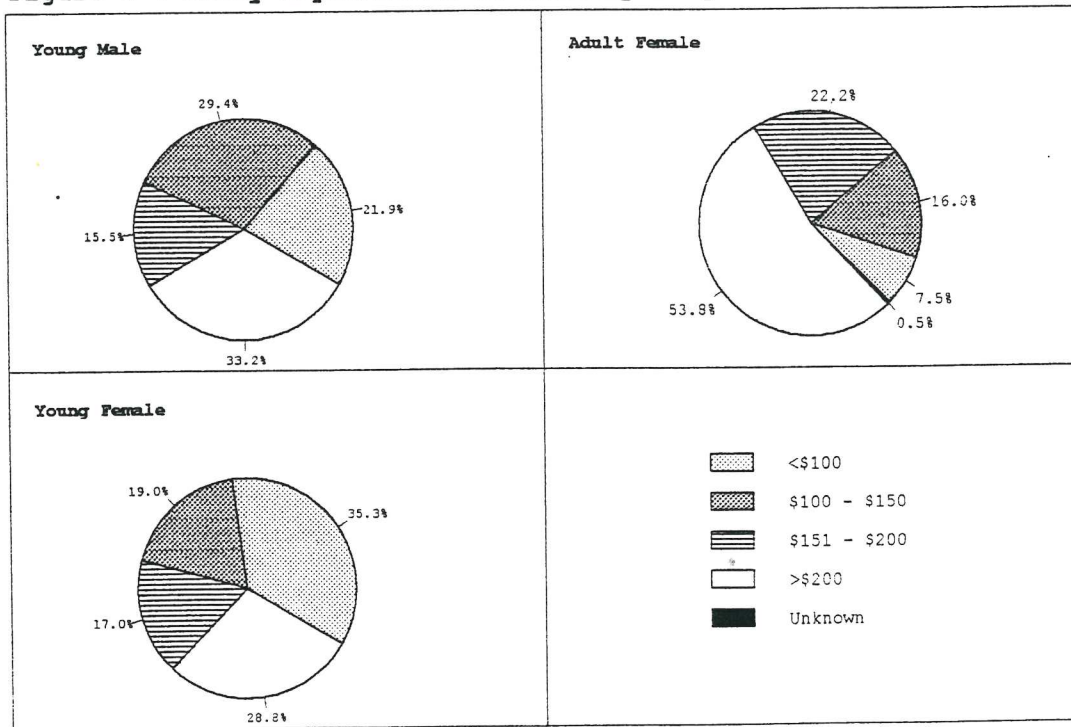
11. Over half of the young inmates spent no more than \$150 a day on drugs in the four weeks before detention in DATCs. However, quite a large proportion (31.7%) of them spent more than \$200 a day. Adult abusers generally spent more for their drug habit than young abusers. Over half of the adult female inmates spent more than \$200 a day on drugs while less than one-quarter of them spent \$150 or less a day on drugs before institutional custody.

Table 4 : DATCs inmates by daily expenditure

Daily expenditure on primary drug	Young inmates aged under 21						Adult female inmates		TOTAL	
	Male		Female		Total		No.	%	No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
< \$100	68	21.9	54	35.3	122	26.3	16	7.5	138	20.4
\$100 - \$150	91	29.4	29	19.0	120	25.9	34	16.0	154	22.8
\$151 - \$200	48	15.5	26	17.0	74	16.0	47	22.2	121	17.9
> \$200	103	33.2	44	28.8	147	31.7	114	53.8	261	38.7
Unknown							1	0.5	1	0.1
Total	310	100.0	153	100.0	463	100.0	212	100.0	675	100.0

Note : The above statistics cover daily expenditure on primary drug only. Similar data on secondary drug are not analysed in view of the small number of cases.

Figure 1 : Daily Expenditure on Primary Drug



Source of money for primary drug of abuse (Table 5 and Figure 2)

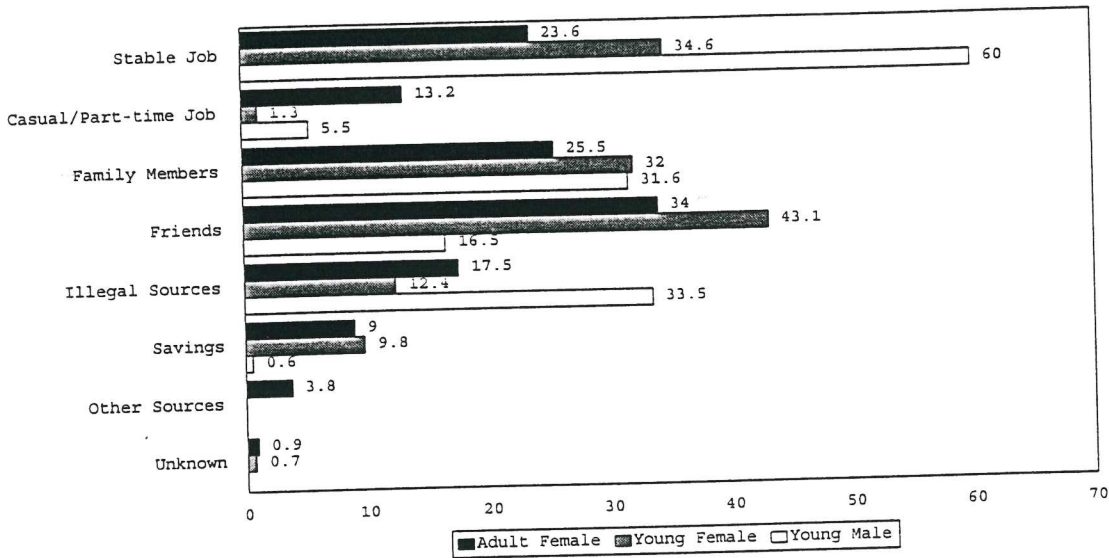
12. On the source of money for drug taking, about two-thirds of the young male inmates got money from a job while over half of the female inmates obtained money from family members or friends. A large proportion (33.5%) of the young male inmates got money from some illegal sources, compared to 12.4% and 17.5% respectively for the young and adult female inmates. Only a few DATC inmates (5.3%), in particular among the young males (0.6%), used their own savings to finance drug taking.

Table 5 : Source of money for primary drug of abuse for DATCs inmates

Source of money for primary drug taking	Young inmates aged under 21						Adult female inmates		TOTAL	
	Male		Female		Total					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Stable Job	186	60.0	53	34.6	239	51.6	50	23.6	289	42.8
Casual/Part-time Job	17	5.5	2	1.3	19	4.1	28	13.2	47	7.0
Family Members	98	31.6	49	32.0	147	31.7	54	25.5	201	29.8
Friends	51	16.5	66	43.1	117	25.3	72	34.0	189	28.0
Illegal Sources	104	33.5	19	12.4	123	26.6	37	17.5	160	23.7
Savings	2	0.6	15	9.8	17	3.7	19	9.0	36	5.3
Other Sources							8	3.8	8	1.2
Unknown			1	0.7	1	0.2	2	0.9	3	0.4

- Notes : (1) The above statistics cover source of money for primary drug only. Similar data on secondary drug are not analysed in view of the small number of cases.
- (2) Included under illegal sources 2 young females and 8 adult females who obtained money through prostitution.

Figure 2 : Source of Money for Primary Drug Taking



Source of money and triad affiliation (Table 6)

14. Income from employment and family members were important sources of money for both triad-affiliated and non-triad affiliated inmates. Compared the two groups, it was noted that a larger proportion of triad-affiliated inmates obtained their money through illegal sources than their non-triad affiliated counterparts whereas they were less reliant on their friends for the money to support their drug habit.

Table 6 : DATCs inmates by triad affiliation by source of money for primary drug taking

Triad affiliation/ source of money	Young inmates aged under 21						Adult female inmates		TOTAL	
	Male		Female		Total					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Triad affiliated</u>										
Stable Job	124	59.3			124	59.0	3	30.0	127	57.7
Casual/Part-time Job	10	4.8			10	4.8	3	30.0	13	5.9
Family Members	62	29.7			62	29.5	1	10.0	63	28.6
Friends	28	13.4			28	13.3	1	10.0	29	13.2

Table 6 (Cont'd)

Triad affiliation/ source of money	Young inmates aged under 21						Adult female inmates		TOTAL	
	Male		Female		Total					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Triad affiliated</u>										
Illegal Sources	82	39.2	1	100.0	83	39.5	3	30.0	86	39.1
Savings	2	1.0			2	1.0			2	0.9
<u>Non-triad affiliated</u>										
Stable Job	62	61.4	53	34.9	115	45.5	47	23.3	162	35.6
Casual/Part-time Job	7	6.9	2	1.3	9	3.6	25	12.4	34	7.5
Family Members	36	35.6	49	32.2	85	33.6	53	26.2	138	30.3
Friends	23	22.8	66	43.4	89	35.2	71	35.1	160	35.2
Illegal Sources	22	21.8	18	11.8	40	15.8	34	16.8	74	16.3
Savings			15	9.9	15	5.9	19	9.4	34	7.5
Other Sources							8	4.0	8	1.8
Unknown			1	0.7	1	0.4	2	1.0	3	0.7

Note : The above statistics cover source of money for primary drug only.
Similar data on secondary drug are not analysed in view of the small number of cases.

Source of money and daily expenditure (Table 7)

14. The percentages of DATC inmates who quoted illegal sources as the means of financing their drug habit increased with their daily expenditures. For young male inmates, the percentage jumped from 14.7% for under \$100 daily expenditure to 50.5% for over \$200 daily expenditure. The corresponding figures for young female inmates were 3.7% to 25.0% and for adult female inmates, 6.3% to 29.8%.

Table 7 : DATCs inmates by source of money and daily expenditure

Daily expenditure/ source of money	Young inmates aged under 21						Adult female inmates		TOTAL	
	Male		Female		Total		No.	%	No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
<u>< \$100</u>										
Stable Job	45	66.2	25	46.3	70	57.4	7	43.8	77	55.8
Casual/Part-time Job	3	4.4			3	2.5			3	2.2
Family Members	27	39.7	20	37.0	47	38.5	1	6.3	48	34.8
Friends	9	13.2	21	38.9	30	24.6	4	25.0	34	24.6
Illegal Sources	10	14.7	2	3.7	12	9.8	1	6.3	13	9.4
Savings			6	11.1	6	4.9	1	6.3	7	5.1
Other Sources							2	12.5	2	1.4
Unknown							1	6.3	1	0.7
<u>\$100 - \$150</u>										
Stable Job	56	61.5	10	34.5	66	55.0	10	29.4	76	49.4
Casual/Part-time Job	8	8.8			8	6.7	2	5.9	10	6.5
Family Members	38	41.8	13	44.8	51	42.5	11	32.4	62	40.3
Friends	15	16.5	13	44.8	28	23.3	14	41.2	42	27.3
Illegal Sources	27	29.7	2	6.9	29	24.2	1	2.9	30	19.5
Savings	2	2.2	2	6.9	4	3.3	3	8.8	7	4.5
Other Sources							1	2.9	1	0.6
Unknown							1	2.9	1	0.6
<u>\$151 - \$200</u>										
Stable Job	30	62.5	7	26.9	37	50.0	14	29.8	51	42.1
Casual/Part-time Job	4	8.3	1	3.8	5	6.8	7	14.9	12	9.9
Family Members	14	29.2	8	30.8	22	29.7	15	31.9	37	30.6
Friends	11	22.9	10	38.5	21	28.4	19	40.4	40	33.1
Illegal Sources	15	31.3	4	15.4	19	25.7	1	2.1	20	16.5

Table 7 (Cont'd)

Daily expenditure/ source of money	Young inmates aged under 21						Adult female inmates		TOTAL	
	Male		Female		Total		No.	%	No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
<u>\$151 - \$200</u>										
Savings			3	11.5	3	4.1	5	10.6	8	6.6
Other Sources							1	2.1	1	0.8
Unknown			1	3.8	1	1.4			1	0.8
<u>> \$200</u>										
Stable Job	55	53.4	11	25.0	66	44.9	19	16.7	85	32.6
Casual/Part-time Job	2	1.9	1	2.3	3	2.0	18	15.8	21	8.0
Family Members	19	18.4	8	18.2	27	18.4	27	23.7	54	20.7
Friends	16	15.5	22	50.0	38	25.9	35	30.7	73	28.0
Illegal Sources	52	50.5	11	25.0	63	42.9	34	29.8	97	37.2
Savings			4	9.1	4	2.7	10	8.8	14	5.4
Other Sources							4	3.5	4	1.5

Notes : (1) One case with unknown daily expenditure is excluded.
 (2) The above statistics cover source of money and daily expenditure on primary drug only. Similar data on secondary drug are not analysed in view of the small number of cases.

Summary of findings

15. The results of the analyses show that young male and adult female inmates of DATCS tend to have a greater expenditure on drug than young female inmates. Stable job is the main source of young male inmates whereas friends are the major source for females. A greater proportion of young males also rely on illegal sources. On the source of money for varying daily expenditure and triad affiliation, the results indicate that there is a positive relationship between obtaining money through illegal sources with increasing daily expenditure and triad affiliation.

LIMITATIONS

16. In interpreting the findings of the study, it should be noted that they cannot be taken as representative of the drug addict population as a whole as it only covers criminals at DATCs whose characteristics, at least for some aspects, are different from the drug addicts who have never committed any crime. Moreover, the results of the study cannot be used to infer the entire offender population because firstly, it does not encompass adult male addicts, who represent about two-thirds of the total addicts in DATCs; secondly, it only covers the DATC inmates and does not include those drug addicts who are sentenced to imprisonment; and thirdly, only about one-third of the total young male DATC cases can be included in the study.

17. For the study, only a limited number of variables in the CSD questionnaires are extracted for analysis, as the records are not yet computerised and we have to resort to manual data extraction and then input the data to microcomputer for analysis. This is resources consuming and also restricts the scope that the study can be carried out.

