

**An Analysis of
the Reported Drug Abuse Trend
in the Past Decade, 1987 - 1996**



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2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

2.1 The drug abuse situation in the past decade (1987 - 1996) can be summarised as follows :

- a) In the past decade, the CRDA recorded an average of 17 200 individuals each year. Of whom, 3 300 (19%) were newly reported drug abusers. There was a marked increase in the number of individuals reported as well as the newly reported persons in the latter half of the decade. (paragraphs 3.1 - 3.2)
- b) Law enforcement agencies and methadone clinics were the two major types of reporting agencies of the CRDA, accounting for the majority of the total reported drug abusers throughout the decade. In particular, more of the newly reported drug abusers were reported by the law enforcement agencies. (paragraphs 3.3 - 3.4)
- c) There was an increase in the prevalence of drug abuse in the decade. Males and persons aged under 21 were observed to exhibit a higher rate of drug abuse. When analysed by district of residence, higher abuse rates for reported individuals were observed in Yau Tsim Mong, Sham Shui Po, Wong Tai Sin and Kwun Tong, while higher abuse rates for newly reported persons were found in Tuen Mun, Yau Tsim Mong, Islands and Yuen Long. (paragraphs 4.1 - 4.4)
- d) The decade saw the decline in the significance of narcotics abuse on the one hand and the emergence of psychotropic substances abuse on the other. (paragraphs 5.1 and 6.1)
- e) Heroin continued to be the most popular drug of abuse throughout the decade despite the decline in its predominance. The proportion of newly reported heroin abusers fluctuated downwards from 76.5% in 1987 to 53.4% in 1996 and that of reported individuals having abused heroin fluctuated downwards from 96.9% in 1987 to 86.5% in 1996. (paragraphs 5.2 and 6.2)
- f) Cannabis emerged as the most common psychotropic substance among the drug abusers reported to the CRDA,

especially among those aged under 21. The proportion of newly reported cannabis abusers rose from 4.8% in 1987 to 29.3% in 1996 and that of reported individuals having abused cannabis rose from 0.6% in 1987 to 8.5% in 1996. (paragraphs 5.3 and 6.3)

- g) Towards the latter half of the decade, cough medicine emerged as the second most common psychotropic substance of abuse, especially among young drug abusers aged under 21. The proportion of newly reported cough medicine abusers rose from 3.1% in 1988 to 8.9% in 1996 and that of reported individuals having abused cough medicine rose from 0.3% in 1988 to 3.1% in 1996. (paragraphs 5.4 and 6.4)
- h) Towards the latter half of the decade, there were marked increases in the proportions of abusers of amphetamines and organic solvents. On the other hand, there was a sharp decrease in the proportion of methaqualone abusers over the decade. (paragraphs 5.5 and 6.5)
- i) Over the decade, the majority (over 78%) of drug abusers were male. The proportion of reported female individuals increased gradually from 7.7% in 1987 to 12.3% in 1996. (paragraphs 5.6 and 6.6)
- j) The decade saw the decline in the age of drug abusers reported to the CRDA. The proportion of newly reported persons aged over 40 decreased from 20.2% in 1987 to 4.9% in 1996 while the proportion of those aged under 21 rose from 30.0% in 1987 to 43.2% in 1996. Likewise, the proportion of reported individuals aged over 40 decreased from 30.9% in 1987 to 29.1% in 1996 while the proportion of those aged under 21 rose from 7.9% in 1987 to 18.6% in 1996. In comparison, the mean age of male drug abusers was higher than their female counterparts. (paragraphs 5.7 - 5.8 and 6.7 - 6.8)
- k) There was also a decrease in the age when drug abusers started taking drugs. The mean age of initial drug abuse among newly reported persons decreased from 21.8 in 1987 to 20.9 in 1996 and that of reported individuals decreased from 19.6 in 1987 to 18.6 in 1996. On average, female drug

abusers had started drug use at an age earlier than their male counterparts. (paragraphs 5.9 and 6.9)

- l) The majority (over 58%) of drug abusers were single. There was an increase in the proportion of those who were single, divorced, separated or widowed while there was a decrease in the proportion of those who were married or cohabiting. (paragraphs 5.10 and 6.10)
- m) The education attainment of drug abusers was much higher towards the end of the decade, in particular the newly reported persons. The proportion of newly reported persons who had received secondary education increased significantly from 54.2% in 1987 to 83.0% in 1996 and that of reported individuals increased from 33.7% in 1987 to 59.9% in 1996. On the other hand, the proportion of newly reported persons who had received primary education or no schooling decreased sharply from 43.1% in 1987 to 15.0% in 1996 while that of reported individuals decreased from 65.6% in 1987 to 39.5% in 1996. Likewise, there was a marked decrease in the proportion of drug abusers who had received vocational training. (paragraphs 5.11 and 6.11)
- n) The majority (over 51%) of drug abusers were employed at the time of report. However, the proportion of the employed drug abusers decreased gradually in the decade. (paragraphs 5.12 and 6.12)
- o) There was a slight decrease in the proportion of drug abusers who admitted previous convictions over the decade. The proportion of newly reported persons who had previous convictions decreased from 47.9% in 1987 to 42.7% in 1996 and that of reported individuals decreased from 85.7% in 1987 to 80.9% in 1996. (paragraphs 5.13 and 6.13)
- p) A greater proportion of the drug abusers reported in the decade were known to live in Kwun Tong, Yau Tsim Mong, Sham Shui Po, Wong Tai Sin and Tuen Mun. (paragraphs 5.14 and 6.14)