

RAPID SITUATION ASSESSMENT OF Drugs and At Risk Youth Ages 18-25 In The Bahamas



**Ministry of National Security
National Anti- Drug Secretariat
OAS / CICAD**

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Introduction

- Drug use is becoming a vexing problem globally. The Bahamas like other countries is no exception.
- Licit drugs such as alcohol, prescription and non prescription drugs and illicit drugs such as marijuana and cocaine continue to be misused and abused by persons for a myriad of reasons.
- Drug use not only impact the users but also any contribution that they are able to make to the socioeconomic viability of their communities and country.

Definition of Terms

Drugs

- Any drug or substances when ingested, inhaled or injected has an effect on one's mental state and/or behavior.

Drug Abuse

- The frequent, compulsive use of licit or illicit drugs in a manner that is harmful or habit forming that can lead to addiction.

Definition of Terms

At Risk Youth

- Young persons who have difficulty adjusting and are at risk for dropping out of school, or do not have the requisite skill to lead productive lives after graduating from high school. They may also experience emotional problems and are often more likely to develop attitudinal and behavioral problems (Moore, 2006).

Methodology

- This is a qualitative study, using a Rapid Situation Assessment Methodology.
- The survey was conducted between the months of March - July 2017.
- New Providence, Grand Bahama, Exuma and Abaco.

Methodology

Participants

- The participants included youth ages of 18 – 25 years old who had used drugs for at least a year up to the time of the study; and key informants

Sampling

- A purposive sampling technique, inclusive of a convenience sampling technique and a snowball sampling technique was used.

Methodology

Sampling Cont'd

- 60 persons meeting the inclusion criteria were selected; 20 persons from NP, 20 persons from FPO and 10 persons each from Abaco and Exuma.
- 9 Key Informants working with and among the population under study.

Methodology

- Participants were informed of the study and its purpose verbally and by way of an information sheet.
- They were also given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- A sign in sheet was provided, they could use their names, a fake name or initials whichever they preferred.

Methodology

- Registering and completing the survey indicated consent.
- Each subject who completed the survey received an incentive of \$50.00.
- Ethics clearance was obtained from the PHA /UWI Ethics Committee.
- Responses were recorded electronically as well as by pen and paper.

Methodology

Data Collection

- Focus group discussions were used to obtain information from the 60 participants. An interview guide developed specifically for the study was used to guide the discussions.

Methodology

Data Collection Cont'd

- Key informants were interviewed using a modified version of the interview guide used with the Focus Groups

Findings



Table 1. Profile of Key Informants

Description of Key Informant	Gender	Number of Key Informant
Police Officer	Female	1
Social Worker	Female	1
Community Centre Director	Male	2
Community worker	Female	1
Rehabilitative Councilors	Male	2
Local Business Man (Drug Dealer)	Male	1
Demand Reduction Professional	Female	1
Total		9

Chart 1. Number Of Respondents By Gender

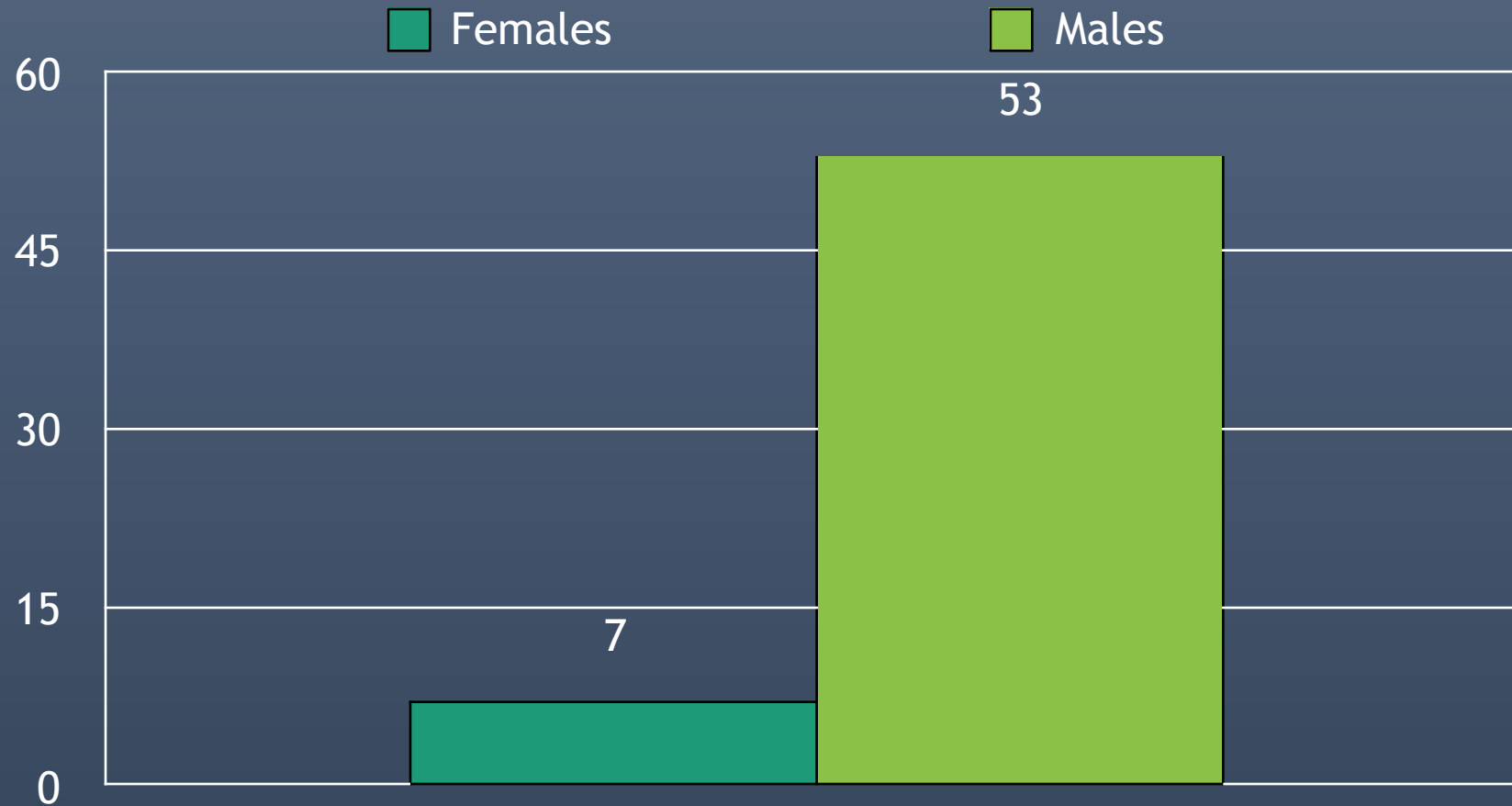


Table 2. Ages of Respondents

Age	Number	%
18	4	7.0
19	7	12.0
20	8	13.0
21	7	12.0
22	3	5.0
23	6	10.0
24	11	18.0
25	14	23.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 3. Level of Education Completed

Island	Completed High School	Did Not Complete High School	Currently in School High School
Nassau	12	7	1
Grand Bahama	20	0	0
Abaco	4	5	1
Exuma	10	0	0
Total	46	12	2

Table 4. Employment Status Of Respondents.

Island	Employed	Unemployed	Comments
Nassau	12	8	
Grand Bahama	10	10	
Abaco	9	1	Recovering from accident
Exuma	9	1	On summer Break
Total	40	20	

Summary of Key Informants' Responses

- Recognized drugs as prescription and non prescription, licit and illicit drugs.
- Molly, weed, ecstasy, cocaine, crack, heroin, alcohol.
- Felt that drugs are very accessible.
- The use of drugs does contribute to criminal behaviors, inclusive of robberies, assaults.

Summary of Key Informants' Responses

- Noted that drug use may be related to peer pressure, low self esteem, experimentation and lack of after school activities.
- They noted that the prevention messages were out dated, must include social media to increase distribution of messages.
- Promote a healthy life style not just focus on drug use.

Summary of Key Informants' Responses

- Most of the key informants were concerned about persons being arrested and imprisoned for having one marijuana cigarette.
- Feels that the law should be amended and marijuana decriminalized as in the case of medicinal use.

Profile of Female Respondents

- Seven females participated in the survey.
- Ages 20-25.
- Six of them completed high school and one completed college and has a “corporate job”.
- Females on the FI were reluctant to admit how often they smoked marijuana. Their responses were occasionally, but when probed admitted it was at least every day in one case and 2-3 per week in the others.

Profile of Female Respondents

- The majority of the females were introduced to marijuana by “my friend” which in most case was a male.
- They denied it affecting their productivity on their jobs.
- The one female who had been arrested denied being arrested for marijuana.

Question 1: When You Hear The Word Drugs What Do You Think Of?

The majority of the respondents said that they think of:

- Pills, ecstasy, molly, cocaine, crack, prescription and non prescription drugs, anything made in a lab, alcohol and tobacco.

They do not think of marijuana as a drug.

Question 1: When You Hear The Word Drugs What Do You Think Of?

- The majority of respondents stated that Marijuana is not a drug, it is a plant.
- Only two of the respondents thought of marijuana as a Drug.

QUESTION 2: How Long Have You Been Using Drugs?

Length of Time Respondents Have Been Using Marijuana

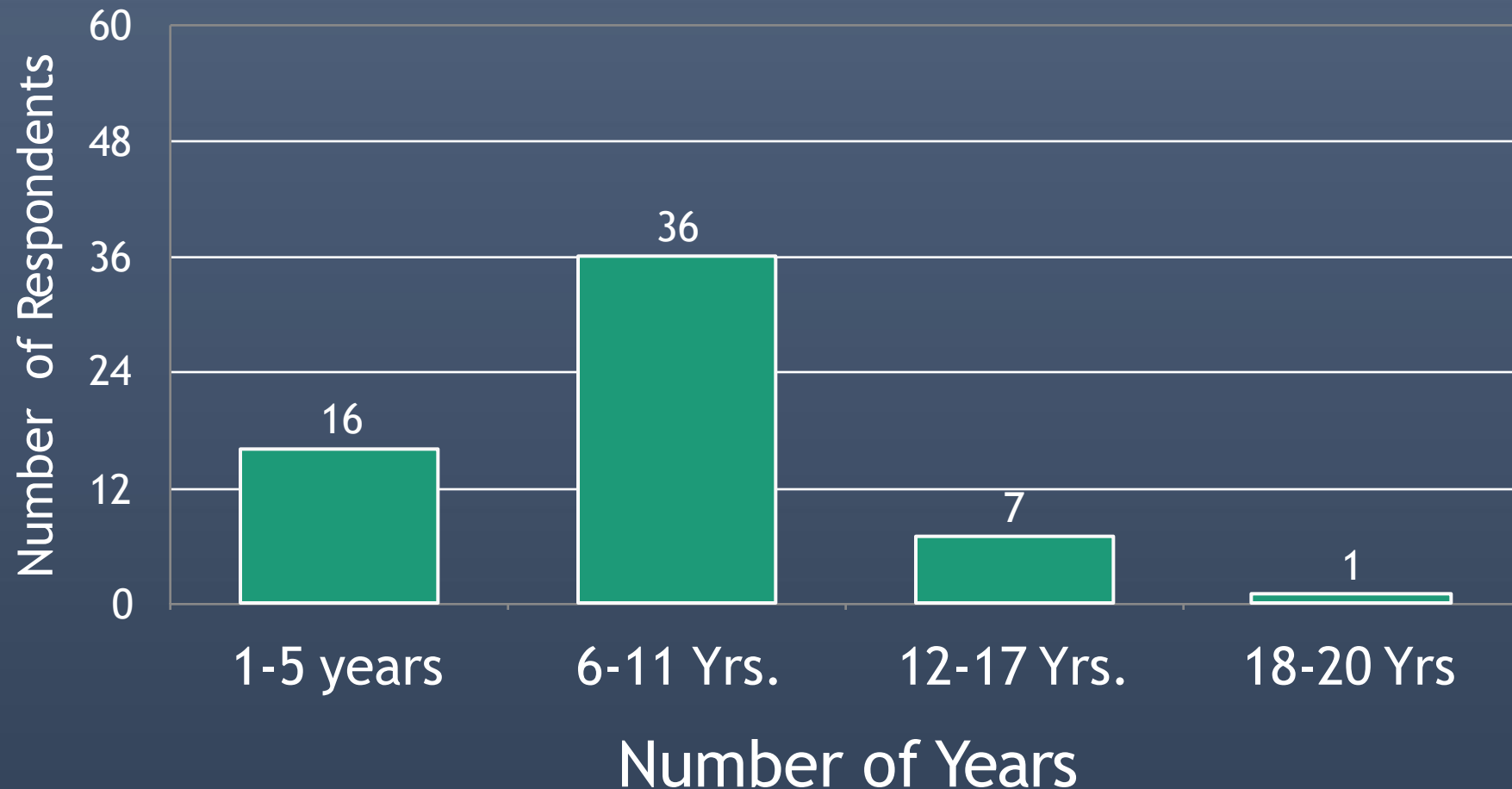


Table 5. Ages That Respondents Started Using Marijuana.

Age Groups	Number of Respondents	%
5 - 9	1	2
10 -14	31	52
15 - 19	23	38
20 - 24	5	8
25 - 29	0	0
Total	60	100

Question 3a : How Easy Is It To Get Drugs?

The majority of respondents noted that it was very easy to get drugs;

- As simple as walking out of ones front door, buying water, get it from family members, have it delivered.

Respondents in the rural areas said it was not easy to get drugs.

Question 3b: Why Would Someone Start Using Drugs?

- Peer pressure, curiosity, experimenting, environment, tired of feeling regular, wanted a change.
- To fit in, to be accepted.
- To cope with grief, (when their mother died).
- One person said he started smoking because his girlfriend smoked and he didn't want anyone else smoking with her.

Question 3c: How Early Do Persons Start Taking Drugs?

- Respondents in New Providence and Grand Bahama felt that persons start taking drugs as early as 9 years old.
- One respondent admitted to starting using marijuana as early as five years old.
- In the two family Islands surveyed, respondents felt that persons started taking drugs at 12 years old; a few years later than those in the Urban areas.

Question 3d: What Are The Effects Of Drugs?

Majority of respondents said there are **NO** effects of Marijuana but did note however that smoking it makes one:

- Hungry
- Sleepy
- Relaxed
- Calm
- Drops IQ
- Forgetful
- Lazy

Question 3d: What Are The Effects Of Drugs?

- While they stated that marijuana has no side effects, they did note that cocaine, crack and alcohol causes one to “race

Question 4: What Role Do You Think Drug Use Play In Someone Becoming Involved In Criminal Activity?

- All most all of the respondents said that marijuana use does not play a role in someone becoming involved in criminal activity. They stated that if someone commits a crime, that was always their intent.
- Some persons noted however that having the marijuana constitutes criminal activity because possessing it is illegal.

Question 4. Cont'd: Drug Use And Criminal Activity

- They noted however that using cocaine will cause one to rob for the drug, because coke, crack is very addictive and have you on “edge” all the time.
- That the use of Alcohol will also help to "race" you up, giving you a sense of false confidence and invincibility.

Question 5: What Role Did Drug Use Play In You Being In Your Current Situation?

- Some respondents stated that drug use did not play a role in their current situation but it did play a role in the past.
- One respondent noted that it did prevent him from having a career in basket ball.

Table 6. Respondents Who Have Been Arrested in The Past

Cause for Arrest	Number Arrested	Outcome of Arrest
Possession	1	Charged and fined
Suspicion of possession	1	Questioned and released
Possession, intent to supply	1	8 months imprisonment
Possession	1	2 months imprisonment
Unrelated to Drugs	4	Imprisonment
One Joint	1	Imprisonment
Total	9	

Question 6: What Do You Think About The Commercials And Posters That Talk About Saying No To Drugs?

Respondent said that they were:

- Out dated,
- Did not speak to the young people.
- Felt that they were a waste of time and money.
- They were not explicit enough.
- Should be linked to website with more information.
- Advertisements should be placed in problem areas.

Question 7: What Are Some Of The Things That Would Deter You From Using Drugs?

Almost all of the respondents said that nothing would stop them from using drugs.

Others said they would stop using:

- Mandatory testing.
- Married and started a family.
- To pursue a real career.

Question 8: How Long Do You Think It Takes Before Someone Is Addicted To Drugs?

- The majority of the respondents stated that one cannot become addicted to marijuana, but it is possible to become addicted to other drugs such as cocaine, oxy, ecstasy and prescription drugs and alcohol.
- Two persons admitted that addiction to marijuana is possible and noted that it can happen after the first smoke.
- A few stated within the first few weeks to a few months.

Question 9: How Easy Is It To Stop Using Drugs?

All of the respondents except for one indicated that it was very easy to stop, but they just don't want to stop permanently.

- They do take breaks however.
 - Breaks may last anywhere from months to weeks or even days.
- One respondent stopped because he was on medication .
- One had stopped because he was hoping to join the Defense Force, but because they took to long he started again.

Question 10: When Was The Last Time You Used Drugs?

- More than half of the respondents used marijuana or drank alcohol within 15 minutes of being interviewed.
- At least twenty persons used drugs about one week to 3 months prior to the interview. These were persons were in a program and had been referred from the court.

Question 11: What Would Cause Someone To Sell Drugs?

- Economic reasons
 - School fees
 - Medical bills
 - Help out family
- Greed
- Demand
- Opportunity



Question 12: How Much Do You Normally Spend On Drugs Per Week?

- The majority of respondents spent about \$ 100 - 300 per week on marijuana and Alcohol.
- Those that spent less, were able to supplement their purchases by getting it from friends.



“But if you just get off from work cause you is a working citizen you just want get a joint to chill when you get home, you walking and the man pull up and your whole life mess up cause of one \$ 3 dollar joint”.

Conclusions

- The respondents all denied using cocaine and seemed to have a certain disdain for persons who did. They were very defensive when asked about whether marijuana contributed to criminal activity.
- Many of the respondents did not consider marijuana to be a drug.
- They insisted that it was a plant, denied that it is harmful or addictive.
- That there are no effects from the use of Marijuana.
- Most of the respondents were very vocal about being arrested and imprisoned for one joint; They noted that if you do go to jail, there are no programmes that you can participate in that will help you to stop.

Conclusion

- Respondent also noted that there were not enough activities to keep them occupied and away from the environments where the drugs are sold, especially for after school.
- They also stated that the bill Boards with the anti-drug messages were a waste of time, because they were not relevant, were not graphic enough and their placement was not in the areas where it was likely that drug use was more prevalent or in the areas where the targeted audience lived.

Recommendations

- Increased and sustained educational messages to targeted areas, like schools and in the community.
- Make messages relevant by using social media, providing links on line information.
- Amend the law removing penalty for one joint.
- Sustained after-school programs/community outreaches.
- Increase rehabilitative programs.
- More structured programs.



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.
HAVE A GREAT DAY!**