

# Drug abuse and drug situation in Hong Kong in first three quarters of 2023

The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) noted at its meeting today (December 14) the statistical figures of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) and other drug-related figures in the first three quarters of 2023. The ACAN noticed that the total number of reported drug abusers in the first three quarters of 2023 was higher than that for the first three quarters in 2022, which was during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Hong Kong has resumed normalcy in full, there would be changes in the drug situation. The ACAN will closely monitor the relevant situation, and will continue to take forward corresponding anti-drug work.

Figures from the CRDA revealed that the total number of reported drug abusers in the first three quarters of 2023 increased by 5 per cent (from 4 204 to 4 416) compared with that of the same period in 2022. The number of reported young drug abusers aged under 21 declined by 12 per cent (from 599 to 527). The most common type of drugs abused in the first three quarters of 2023 was heroin, followed by cocaine (commonly known as "coke") and then methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice"); while the most common type of drugs abused among the reported young drug abusers aged under 21 was cocaine, followed by cannabis.

The ACAN continues to express concern about the cocaine abuse situation. Just as in 2022, cocaine continued to be the most common type of psychotropic substance abused in the first three quarters of 2023. For the same period, cocaine was also the most common type of drug abused among the reported young drug abusers aged under 21, with over half of them (53 per cent) having abused cocaine. In addition, when categorising arrests for drug offences by drug types, the number of persons arrested for offences related to cocaine was also the highest.

The ACAN Chairman, Dr Donald Li, said, "Cocaine is highly addictive and can cause delirium, convulsions, unconsciousness and even death. Moreover, cocaine could cost its abusers their life savings and burden them with enormous debts since they cannot get rid of the addiction to the drug. Cocaine is rampant across the globe. In view of its profound harmful effects and the increasing number of reported cocaine abusers when compared with the same period last year, we will launch a series of anti-drug education and publicity work to heighten the vigilance of members of the public, especially young people, against cocaine. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind everyone not to take drugs, including cocaine, cannabis and so on, when celebrating Christmas and New Year."

Dr Li added, "The global supply of cocaine has surged in recent years. To evade attention, drug traffickers adopt multifarious methods to conceal drugs in liquor bottles, life-saving appliances and frozen food, etc. Members of the public are reminded not to carry unknown items for other people.

Otherwise, they are liable to serious criminal liabilities which will cause lifelong regrets."

The spokesperson for the Narcotics Division (ND) of the Security Bureau reminded that drug dealers may post recruitment advertisements on websites and social media platforms to lure citizens, especially students and young people, into carrying dangerous drugs. The ND called for members of the public not to participate in drug trafficking out of greed for monetary rewards. The spokesperson stressed that young age is not a valid mitigating factor. Anyone who has committed a drug offence is liable for serious criminal punishment. In particular, the maximum penalty for drug trafficking is life imprisonment and a fine of \$5 million. The ND will display posters and banners at various boundary control points to remind members of the public not to bring any dangerous drugs into and out of Hong Kong.

The website of the ND ([www.nd.gov.hk](http://www.nd.gov.hk)) contains detailed information about drugs, including frequently asked questions about cocaine and cannabis for the public's reference. If members of the public encounter any drug problems, they can send messages to 98 186 186 on instant messaging applications WhatsApp and WeChat, or call the 24-hour hotline 186 186 to seek information or assistance from professional social workers.

The figures of the CRDA for the first three quarters of 2023 are also available on the website of the ND ([www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda\\_main\\_charts\\_and\\_tables.html](http://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda_main_charts_and_tables.html)).