

Total number of reported drug abusers in decline but drug abuse among young adults and hidden drug abuse still require attention

The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) reviewed the local drug situation in the first half of 2018 at its quarterly meeting today (September 18). The overall number of reported drug abusers declined compared to the same period last year, while drug abuse among young adults and hidden drug abuse still call for attention.

According to the latest figures of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA), the total number of reported drug abusers in the first half of 2018 decreased by 4 per cent (from 4 166 to 4 018) compared with the same period last year. The number of reported drug abusers aged under 21 registered a decrease of 7 per cent (from 275 to 255).

The number of newly reported drug abusers decreased by 3 per cent (from 836 to 815) compared with the same period last year. About half (48 per cent) were young adults aged between 21 and 35, showing that drug abuse in this age group still requires attention.

The latest CRDA figures also revealed that the median history of drug abuse of newly reported abusers (i.e. the time for abusers to be reported to the CRDA by reporting agencies from their first drug abuse) was five years in the first half of 2018, compared with 4.3 years in 2017, indicating that hidden drug abuse remains a concern.

In the first half of 2018, the total number of reported narcotic analgesic abusers increased by 3 per cent (from 2 305 to 2 379). The vast majority were heroin abusers, the number of which increased by 3 per cent (from 2 304 to 2 378). The total number of reported psychotropic substance abusers (PSAs) decreased by 11 per cent (from 2 369 to 2 111) compared to the same period last year. Among the newly reported cases, the number of PSAs (at 715) was considerably higher than that of narcotic analgesic abusers (at 101).

Heroin remained the most common type of drug abused among all reported drug abusers. Meanwhile, methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice") continued to be the most common type of psychotropic substance abused, with the number of reported abusers having decreased by 25 per cent (from 1 036 to 776) compared to the same period last year. There were increases in the numbers of reported cocaine abusers (from 474 to 516) and cannabis abusers (from 194 to 220). Increased cocaine and cannabis abuse among reported young drug abusers aged under 21 was also observed (the number of cocaine abusers increased from 122 to 146; the number of cannabis abusers increased from 68 to 75).

The numbers of abusers of other major types of psychotropic substances also saw reductions, including triazolam/midazolam/zopiclone (from 510 to 509), ketamine (from 418 to 260), cough medicine (from 148 to 133), MDMA ("ecstasy") (from 16 to 15) and nimetazepam (from 17 to 13).

The ACAN Chairman, Dr Ben Cheung, said, "There are still challenges in our anti-drug work. Although the overall number of reported drug abusers in the first half of 2018 declined, the hidden drug abuse problem persisted. The proportion of drug-abusing young adults remained high, and the numbers of young cocaine abusers and cannabis abusers also increased. Therefore, we will continue to strengthen preventive education and publicity, especially those for youngsters, and explore more means to reach out to hidden drug abusers in co-ordination with the anti-drug sector. Anti-drug information and help are available through the Narcotics Division (ND)'s anti-drug hotline 186 186 and instant messaging service 98 186 186."

The Commissioner for Narcotics, Ms Manda Chan, said, "At the start of the new school year, the ND and ACAN will continue to disseminate anti-drug messages to youngsters through different channels and platforms, including popular websites and mobile applications. Youngsters are encouraged to pursue healthy lifestyles, understand the harms of drug abuse and stay away from drugs."

The CRDA figures for the first half of 2018 are available on the [ND's website](#).