

Barbados Drug Information Network Report

2023

Prepared by
The National Council on Substance Abuse



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1. Key Findings

1.1 Prevention and Drug Education

National Council on Substance Abuse

- The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) is the lead agency responsible for drug education across the island.
- During 2023, persons between the ages of four and 65 years participated in NCSA's programmes.
- The Council's Community interventions had the greatest reach, followed by the School (Secondary, Primary, Tertiary) and Counselling interventions respectively.
- The Counselling Programme continues to attract the smallest number of participants, but this is related to the fact that it primarily provides counselling services to *individuals*, as opposed to the *group-based* drug education provided by the Substance Abuse Prevention Officers through the Community and School Programmes.

Edna Nicholls Centre

- Ninety-three students were admitted to the Edna Nicholls Centre in 2023.
- Most students admitted to the Centre in 2023 were males (84%) and persons between the ages of 13 and 15 years (73.1%).
- Approximately one-third (33%) of the students admitted to the Centre tested positive for marijuana use or had trace amounts of the drug within their system.
- Students testing positive for marijuana use were primarily males between the ages of 13 and 15 years.

1.2 Treatment

Psychiatric Hospital

- Just over one-third (36%) of persons admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023 received drug-related treatment, with the majority being males and/or individuals in the 40 and under age category.
- Co-morbid diagnoses¹ which included substance use disorders were more common among males and those 40 years and under.
- Thirty-one of the 266 persons assessed by the Hospital's Drug Rehabilitation Unit (DRU) were admitted to the Hospital's Day Programme for drug treatment.
- Like the wider hospital admissions, the majority of persons admitted to the Day Programme were males, 40 years of age and younger.
- Just under one third (29%) of those receiving treatment in the Day Programme were treated for poly drug use.
- Marijuana (32.8%) and crack cocaine (32.8) were the most common primary drugs among Day Programme clients, closely followed by alcohol (25.8%).
- A small percentage of clients (6%) sought treatment for their use of ecstasy.

¹ Co-morbid diagnoses refers to the occurrence of 2 or more disorders or illnesses in the same person (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2018).

- Marijuana, crack cocaine, alcohol and ecstasy were the four substances used by Day Programme clients in the 12 months and 30 days preceding treatment entry.
- Eighty youth were admitted to the Thrive Family Centre in 2023, with males accounting for the majority (62%) of the admissions for the year.
- Five of the persons admitted to the Thrive Family Centre received drug-related diagnoses – four males and one female, most of whom were in the 14 to 17 age category.
- Marijuana was the primary substance for all five of the young people with drug-related diagnoses at the Thrive Family Centre in 2023.

Substance Abuse Foundation

- Ninety-six persons were treated at the Substance Abuse Foundation (SAF) in 2023, 86% of whom were males.
- Approximately six out of every 10 persons (59.4%) treated at the SAF were 40 years of age or younger.
- There was a near even distribution of persons seeking treatment for single drug (52%) and poly drug (48%) use.
- Crack cocaine was the most common primary drug for which treatment was sought at the SAF, followed most closely by marijuana, alcohol and cocaine powder.
- Few persons sought treatment for blackies (1.0%), pethidine (1.0%) and crystal meth (1.0%).

Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

- Thirty-five persons were treated at the Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives (CASA) in 2023, 83% of whom were males while 60% were age 30 and under.
- The criminal justice system/police department (71.4%) was the primary referral source for CASA's clients in 2023.
- Most clients (92%) received treatment for single drug use.
- Marijuana (65.7%) was the most common primary drug for which treatment was sought at CASA, distantly followed by alcohol (28.6%) and cocaine powder (5.7%).

National Council on Substance Abuse

- Fifty-six intake sessions were conducted by the Counselling Department at the NCSA in 2023.
- Eighty-nine percent of the persons assessed were referred to services at the NCSA (e.g. counselling, drug education), while the remainder were referred to either the Psychiatric Hospital, Drug Education and Counselling Services (DECS) or the polyclinic system (for a medical issue).
- Of the 36 persons receiving substance abuse treatment, the majority were males, 20 years of age and younger.
- The justice system/police department was the single largest referral source for persons receiving substance abuse treatment at the NCSA in 2023.
- While most persons (97%) were treated for single drug use at the NCSA, there was a small percentage (3%) of clients treated for poly drug use.

- Marijuana was the most common primary drug for which treatment was sought at the NCSA, distantly followed by alcohol and tobacco.

Inmate Drug Rehabilitation and Counselling Programme

- Forty-two inmates were admitted to the Inmate Drug Rehabilitation and Counselling (IDRC) Programme at Dodds Prison in 2023.
- Male inmates (86%) seeking treatment far outnumbered their female counterparts (14%).
- The majority of inmates (76.1%) treated within the programme were between the ages of 21 and 45.
- Most inmates (52.4%) were either court-ordered to participate in the programme or referred by the Inmate Review Board (31%).
- Just over half (54.8%) of the inmates were treated for single drug use.
- Crack cocaine (45.2%) and marijuana (28.6%) were the most common primary drugs among the inmates treated within the programme. Few sought treatment for blackies (14.3%), alcohol (7.1%) or lean (4.8%).

1.3 Supply Control

The Barbados Police Service

- Drug offences accounted for 16% of all offences recorded by The Barbados Police Service (TBPS) during 2023.
- Most persons charged with drug offences were males under the age of 40.
- Approximately nine out of every 10 persons (86.5%) charged with drug offences were Barbadian.
- The majority (82.6%) of drug offences were cannabis-related.
- The remaining drug offences involved cocaine (15.8%) and ecstasy (1.6%).
- The most common cannabis-related offences were “Possession” (29.6%), “Trafficking” (28.7%) and “Intent to Supply” (27.3%).
- Cannabis, in plant, compressed and loose forms, was the primary drug seized by TBPS.
- The majority of cannabis plant seizures took place in the parishes of St. George and St. Philip.
- Two of the thirty-nine deportees returned to Barbados in 2023 were deported for drug-related offences, both of whom were female.
- Both of the drug-related deportees were deported from extra-regional countries, namely: Canada and England.
- There were nine arrests for money laundering recorded in 2023, two of which were drug-related.

Barbados Prison Service (Incarcerations)

- Drug offences accounted for 11% of the incarcerations at Dodds Prison in 2023.
- The majority of persons incarcerated for drug offences were males (78%) and persons under the age of 40 (62.8%).
- “Drug Possession” was the most common drug-related offence for which persons were incarcerated.

- Persons were also incarcerated for “Drug Importation”, “Drug Trafficking”, “Possession of Drug Apparatus”, “Drug Cultivation” and a small number of unspecified drug offences.
- Males between the ages of 20 and 50 accounted for the majority of those incarcerated for “Drug Possession”.
- Those incarcerated for “Possession of Drug Apparatus” were all male, with two thirds of the inmates being in the 60+ age category and the remaining one third in the 35-39 age group.
- Most persons incarcerated for “Drug Trafficking” were males between the ages of 20 and 44.
- Males accounted for the majority of persons incarcerated for “Drug Importation”. All individuals were under the age of 45.
- Only males were incarcerated for “Drug Cultivation”, and these inmates were equally split between the 40 to 44 and 60+ age categories.

Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit

- Data compiled by the Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit (CJRPU) revealed that, during 2023, 329 persons were tried and sentenced for drug-related offences in the island’s Supreme and Magistrates’ Courts (NB This total does not include data from the St. Matthias Magistrate Court as this was not available for inclusion).
- The majority of drug-related cases involved cannabis offences.
- “Possession”, “Trafficking” and “Intent to Supply” were the most common cannabis offences tried in 2023.
- “Reprimanded and Discharged” (R&D), “Convicted, Reprimanded and Discharged” (CRD) and “Dismissed/Withdrawn” were the most common sentence outcomes for cannabis-related offences.
- “Possession”, “Intent to Supply”, “Possession of Apparatus” and “Trafficking” were the top cocaine-related charges adjudicated in 2023.
- “R&D”, “CRD” and “Dismissed/Withdrawn” were the three most common sentence outcomes for cocaine-related offences.
- There were eight methamphetamine-related offences tried, most of which were “Possession”.
- “CRD” was the most common sentence outcome for ecstasy-related cases.
- There were 53 offences involving unspecified controlled drugs. These offences included “Possession”, “Importation”, “Trafficking”, and “Cultivation”.
- “Imprisonment”, “Dismissed/Withdrawn” and “Time Served” were the most common sentence outcomes for cases involving unspecified controlled drugs.

Government Industrial School

- Of the 81 wards who were committed/remanded to – or overnighed at - the Government Industrial School in 2023, one was remanded for a drug-related offence, namely “Drug Trafficking”. The controlled substance involved was marijuana.
- “Robbery” and “Theft” were the two most common offences among males.
- For females, “Assaulting Occasioning” was the most common, far outranking all others.

- Of the 11 wards drug tested in 2023, five tested positive for marijuana use. They were all males between the ages of 13 and 15 years.
- No wards tested positive for cocaine use.

Financial Intelligence Unit

- Of the 206 Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) received in 2023, 1.0% were drug-related.
- A predicate offence² could not be easily identified for 63.1% of the STRs received and attention should be paid to these as law enforcement investigations may later reveal a drug-related link.

Forensic Sciences Centre

- Approximately three quarters (73.6%) of the drug-related cases analysed by the Forensic Sciences Centre in 2023 involved the testing of vegetable matter.
- A small number of cases involved the analysis of powder, resin, tablets, liquids and crystalline solid.
- Cannabis sativa was the primary substance identified, distantly followed by cocaine.
- Cannabis sativa was most likely to be detected in vegetable matter while cocaine was only found in powder form.
- A small number of cases led to the identification of emerging substances such as MDMA³, methamphetamine, cathinone, cannabidiol (CBD), a combination of phenacetin and procaine hydrochloride, and synthetic cannabinoids, namely MDMB 4en PINACA and 4-Fluoro MDMB BUTICA
- The lone CBD case involved a liquid sample while all cocaine-related cases were in powdered form.
- Methamphetamine was only identified in tablets, while MDMA was confirmed in tablets, powder and crystalline solid.
- The synthetic cannabinoids were identified in vegetable matter; and one cathinone case took the form of a powdered sample.

1.4 Trend Analysis

- The Edna Nicholls Centre recorded a small increase in the number of admissions in 2023. This followed the initial post-COVID increase recorded in 2022, thereby suggesting that the Centre is continuing its slow but steady return to pre-COVID admission levels.
- The percentage of students testing positive for marijuana use at the ENC declined in 2022 and 2023, following a marked increase in 2021. The decline may be due in part to the increased number of admissions, and by extension the increased number on which the 2022 and 2023 percentages were calculated.

² A predicate offence is a crime that is a component of a more serious crime (Low, 2020).

³ MDMA is the shortened name for 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine. This synthetic psychoactive drug is better known by its street names: Ecstasy or Molly.

- The marijuana test results for students at the Edna Nicholls Centre highlight an increasing number of students with high/very THC levels between 2019 and 2023. This is suggestive of chronic/recent use and the use of high potency marijuana products.
- The total number of drug treatment admissions in Barbados in 2023 almost equaled that of 2022. As such, the 2022 rebound in admissions which followed the 2020-2021 COVID-related decline was maintained in 2023.
- Males and persons age 40 and under accounted for the majority of persons receiving drug treatment in Barbados between 2019 and 2023.
- Following the previously observed increase in female treatment admissions for the period 2019 through 2022, there was a decline among women seeking treatment in 2023, such that the previous gains were lost and the gender distribution for 2023 returned to that of 2019.
- The treatment population continues to be dominated by persons in the 40 and under age group. During the period 2019 through 2023, between six and seven out of every 10 treatment clients were in this age category.
- Marijuana, crack cocaine and alcohol were consistently the top three primary substances for which treatment was sought between 2019 and 2023.
- For most years, approximately four out of every 10 persons were treated for their use of marijuana.
- The period 2019 through 2023 saw the continued diversification of the local drug situation with the increasing presence of emerging drugs within the treatment sector e.g. ketamine, pethidine, benzodiazepines, lean, crystal meth, ecstasy, etc.
- Between one-quarter and one-third of patients admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital during the period 2019-2023 received co-morbid diagnoses which included a substance use disorder.
- Males under the age of 40 accounted for the majority of persons charged with drug offences between 2019 and 2023.
- Cannabis-related offences far outranked all other drug offences between 2019 and 2023.
- Despite this finding, there was a notable increase in cocaine and ecstasy-related cases in 2023.
- “Possession”, “Trafficking” and “Intent to Supply” were the top three cannabis offences during the period 2019 through 2023.
- While “Possession of Cannabis” was the single most common cannabis offence each year, there has been a continuous decline in “Possession” charges from 2019 onwards. This coincides with the recent relaxation of cannabis-related legislation.
- There has also been a sharp decline in the number of cannabis possession cases tried in the island’s Courts since the aforementioned legislative changes.

1.5 Recommendations to Improve the National Response to the Drug Situation

1. To appropriately respond to possible increases in marijuana potency on island, the purity and potency of this substance should be assessed and tracked by the Forensic Sciences Centre. The information can be used to inform drug prevention initiatives, approaches to drug treatment, the management of marijuana-related medical emergencies and decisions related to any future legalization of the drug.

2. All avenues to curb the misuse of marijuana should be explored, including the potentiality for medicinal marijuana to inadvertently contribute to the view that marijuana is a harmless substance and by extension fuel recreational use. As such, consideration should be given to a public education campaign which distinguishes between medicinal and recreational marijuana, with a specific focus on those in the 40 and under age category. This campaign should make use of traditional and social media and be jointly conducted by the NCSA and the Barbados Cannabis Licensing Authority to ensure the dissemination of accurate and balanced information.
3. Effective national responses to the issue of synthetic/emerging drugs requires an awareness of the substances available in Barbados. To facilitate the requisite laboratory analysis, the capacity of the Forensic Sciences Centre should be expanded through the provision of additional staff, new equipment/upgrades to existing equipment and the relevant testing standards.
4. The legal landscape is a critical element of any national response to drug-related issues. As such, a comprehensive review and update of the *Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, Cap. 131* should be conducted with a view to address any legal loopholes which may exist regarding synthetic/emerging substances. Efforts should also be made to educate the legal fraternity and judiciary about the dangers posed by synthetic drugs, their potency and the small quantities required to cause significant harm. It is believed that increasing the awareness of this population may lead to much-needed harsher penalties for drug offences involving synthetic substances such as methamphetamine and ecstasy.
5. Overdoses and adverse reactions can follow the use of synthetic/emerging drugs. Knowledge of the substances ingested is key to the delivery of effective medical care by first responders and professionals in the medical field. As such, protocols that allow for the conduct of drug testing in medical emergency situations should be established and the resources needed to facilitate such testing be provided.
6. Outside of the immediate medical treatment setting, the findings of toxicology results can prove useful to other medical personnel, first responders, drug treatment providers and prevention specialists. Such information can aid in the diagnosis and treatment of suspected overdose cases and shape targeted prevention and harm-reduction strategies. As such, a formalized overdose surveillance mechanism should be established. Depending on resource availability, this could take the form of a standalone overdose surveillance system or be integrated into existing medical surveillance systems present on island.
7. The recent increase in female drug offenders suggests the need to consider and address issues which directly affect female inmates including: the impact of incarceration on mothers and their children, the occurrence of substance use disorders and a history of traumatic experiences. Approaches should include: initiatives to maintain mother-child relationships; access to screening for substance use disorders on admission to prison as well as timely assessment and drug treatment; access to gender specific drug treatment programmes as needed; the use of trauma-informed approaches to prison healthcare and operational culture (as appropriate) to avoid re-traumatization for persons who have a history of trauma and adverse childhood experiences. These suggestions will require:

- a. An exploration of evidence-based programming aimed at maintaining/promoting family connections in the context of imprisonment. This can be buttressed by local research/needs assessments on the topic.
 - b. The conduct of needs assessments to determine the most appropriate drug treatment methods for women in Dodds Prison as well as the need for/best approaches to trauma informed care and practice for this group.
 - c. Expansion of the Inmate Drug Rehabilitation and Counselling Programme to allow for increased capacity and decreased wait times.
8. To mitigate the negative effects of maternal incarceration on children, special attention should be paid to the offspring of female inmates who are often among the “hidden victims”. Efforts should be made to encourage personal and systemic support for this vulnerable group and can include approaches to maintaining the mother-child connection, mentorship programmes, age appropriate education about parental incarceration and individual/group therapy as needed. As in the case of the female inmates, efforts for the children should also be guided by existing evidence-based approaches and supported by local research/needs assessments.
9. To ensure the provision of comprehensive support to incarcerated mothers and their children, the corrections professionals⁴ at the Barbados Prison Service should partner with relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies to establish an agency network with a suite of services tailored for this population.
10. The recent increase in female drug offending together with research findings which suggest that women are more likely to attribute their illegal activities to drug use and to have higher rates of pre-incarceration drug use and substance use disorders highlight the need for gender-based drug prevention initiatives. It is recommended that drug prevention professionals consider this when designing and implementing programmes, and place a special emphasis on females who are at increased risk for drug use.

⁴ In the context of this report, corrections professionals are considered to be any professional who contributes to the rehabilitative process of inmates at Dodds Prison e.g. Prison Officers, counsellors, health care workers, and other prison personnel.

2. Introduction

The Barbados Drug Information Network (BARDIN) continues to be the primary mechanism through which data on local drug-related activities is collected and shared at the national level. The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) remains the coordinating entity for BARDIN and retains responsibility for collecting and analyzing data, in addition to report writing and dissemination. In this regard, the NCSA is guided by the objectives of BARDIN, which are:

- To strengthen the capacity of Barbados to respond to changing drug use trends
- To provide current epidemiological and other information on substance abuse and regularly update this information
- To identify trends in drug consumption and offences related to illicit drugs
- To provide relevant information for the planning, evaluation and management of drug control programmes

BARDIN reports are produced on an annual basis and cover activities within the demand reduction and supply control sectors for each calendar year. The presented information is based on secondary data collected from Network members. This report is the thirteenth in the BARDIN series and contains data from our long-standing Network members as well as a new member, namely the Forensic Sciences Centre. Also noteworthy is the return of the Inmate Drug Rehabilitation and Counselling Programme. Data from this programme was not included in the reports for 2021 and 2022 as the programme remained on hiatus during those years in an effort to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus among the prison population.

As such, in the coming sections, readers will find data from: The National Council on Substance Abuse, the Edna Nicholls Centre, the Psychiatric Hospital, the Substance Abuse Foundation, the Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives, the Barbados Police Service, the Barbados Prison Service, the Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit, the Government Industrial School, the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Forensic Sciences Centre.

As in previous editions, this report is divided into three broad sections: Prevention and Drug Education, Treatment and Rehabilitation, and Supply Control. It should be noted that data is primarily presented using percentages. However, raw numbers are used in cases involving reporting categories with very small numbers.

3. Prevention and Drug Education

3.1 National Council on Substance Abuse

Approaching its 30th year of operation, the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) remains the government agency with lead responsibility for demand reduction efforts in Barbados. As such, the Council is mandated to conduct drug prevention education in schools and communities, provide drug counselling services to persons across the lifespan and carry out research on the local drug situation.

A synopsis of the persons reached by NCSA's drug prevention education and counselling services is provided in Table 1. The data is disaggregated by category of intervention i.e. primary school, secondary school, tertiary, community, counselling. Where possible, age and gender statistics are also provided, though this was not possible in every instance. While the NCSA frequently participates in mass-based events e.g. health fairs, career showcases, radio and other media programmes, these are not included within the statistics given that they can artificially inflate the number of persons reached.

Table 1 reveals that, in 2023, the NCSA interacted with both children and adults, ranging in age from four to 65 years. Also evident is the fact that the community interventions had the greatest reach. The participants in this category far outnumbered those reached by the various school interventions or the counselling programme. This is supported by Figure 1 which presents the distribution of those served by NCSA's interventions during the period under review.

Of the five categories of interventions presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, the counselling programme had the lowest number of participants. This is to be expected and is a reflection of the work carried out by that department, whereby counselling services are primarily provided to clients on an individual basis as opposed to the group-based drug education sessions carried out by the Substance Abuse Prevention Officers.

Figure 1: Distribution of Persons Reached by NCSA's Programming in 2023

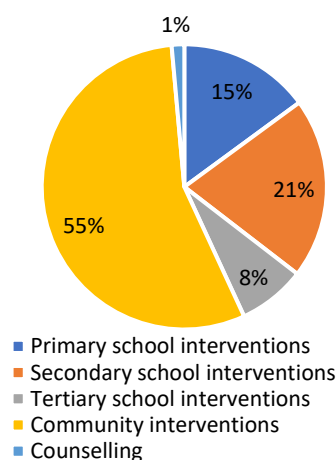


Table 1: Distribution of Persons Reached by NCSA's Drug Education Initiatives in 2023

Intervention	Age Range/ Population Targeted	No. of Males Targeted	No. of Females Targeted	Total no. of Persons Targeted
<u>Primary School Interventions</u>				
Jugs and Herrings	7-9 years	34	32	66
Barbados Substance Abuse Awareness Badge	7-11 years	-	-	275
Choices	9-11 years	-	-	112
Facts and Issues	9-11 years	75	56	131
TOTAL		-	-	584
<u>Secondary School Interventions</u>				
Drugs & Life Skills Awareness Programme	11-19 years	295	471	766
Barbados Substance Abuse Awareness Badge	12-16 years	-	-	25
Ad hoc drug education sessions with secondary school students	14-16 years	-	-	12
TOTAL		-	-	803
<u>Tertiary School Interventions</u>				
Drug Education Through Technology for Tertiary Students	16+ years	-	-	85
Drug Education Sessions at the Barbados Community College	16-50 years	20	60	80
Drug Education Sessions at the Barbados Youth Advance Corps	16-21 years	65	70	135
TOTAL		-	-	300
<u>Community Interventions</u>				
Edna Nicholls Centre	11-16 years	78	15	93
New Horizon Substance Abuse Prevention Class Students	11-16 years	6	0	6
Drug Awareness Sessions for school students	4 – 16 years	-	-	716
Project SOFT Transitional Camp	11-12 years	26	15	41
Prevention 1 st Club Children	12-13 years	12	15	27
Government Industrial School	11-15 years	35	15	50
Drug Education Sessions	Various ages	-	-	291

(Table continued on the next page)

Intervention	Age Range/ Population Targeted	No. of Males Targeted	No. of Females Targeted	Total no. of Persons Targeted
<u>Community Interventions Cont'd</u>				
Drug Awareness Sessions at Summer Camps	6-16 years	-	-	118
Social Work Interns	Various ages	-	1	1
SPORTS – Not Drugs Programme	16-60 years	100	100	200
Stop! Think! Choose!	Adults - various ages	7	17	24
Polyclinic Programme	18-65 years	282	321	603
Mass-based Events (Radio, TV, Social Media Interviews)	Various ages	-	-	-
TOTAL		-	-	2170
<u>Counselling Programme</u>				
Assessment and Counselling	11-60 years	49	7	56
TOTAL		49	7	56

Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

3.2 Edna Nicholls Centre

The Edna Nicholls Centre⁵ recorded an increase in admissions for the second consecutive year (2022: 85 admissions; 2023: 93 admissions) following the observed decreases in 2020 and 2021 which accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shift to online schooling.

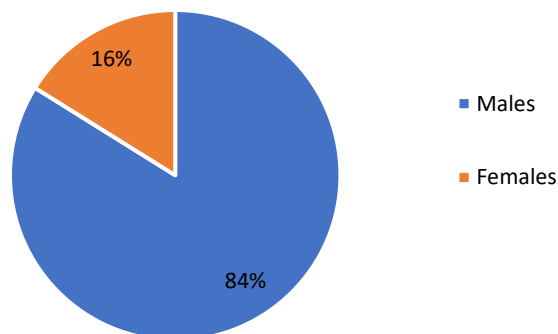
Table 2 shows that, of the 93 students admitted in 2023, the largest number of admissions was recorded in Term I of the 2023/24 academic year (September to December 2023), while Figures 1 and 2 highlight the fact that most of the students admitted were males between the ages of 13 and 15 years.

Table 2: Distribution of Students Admitted to the Edna Nicholls Centre in 2023 by Term of Admission

Term	Academic Year	Number of Students
Term II January to March 2023	2022/23	31
Term III May to July 2023	2022/23	25
Term I September to December 2023	2023/24	37
Total		93

Source: The Edna Nicholls Centre

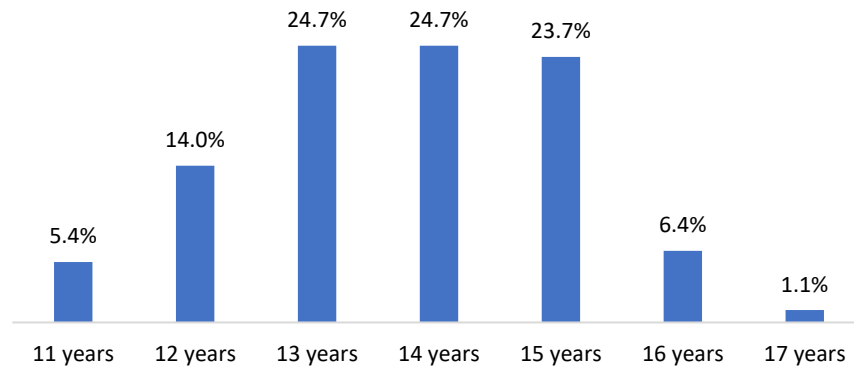
Figure 2: Gender Distribution of the Students Admitted to the Edna Nicholls Centre in 2023



Source: The Edna Nicholls Centre

⁵ The aim of the Edna Nicholls Out-of-School Programme is to provide rehabilitative programmes for secondary school students who have been suspended, referred or expelled from school.

Figure 3: Age Distribution of the Students Admitted to the Edna Nicholls Centre in 2023

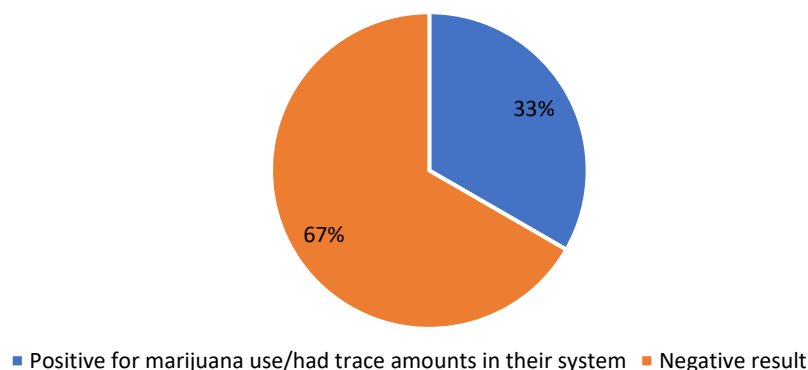


Source: The Edna Nicholls Centre

Drug Testing

As is customary, all students were drug-tested for marijuana and cocaine use on admission. Approximately one-third of students (33%) tested positive for marijuana use (50 ng/ml or higher) or had trace amounts of the drug within their system (more than zero but less than 50 ng/ml)⁶ (See Figure 4). No students tested positive for cocaine use.

Figure 4: Distribution of Students Testing Positive vs. Negative for Marijuana Use

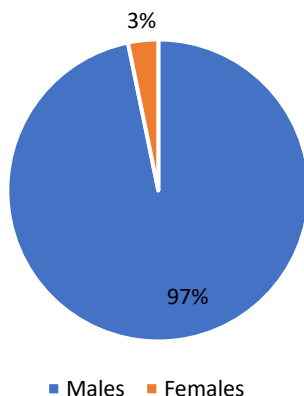


Source: The Edna Nicholls Centre

⁶ Ng/ml refers to nanograms per milliliter. This is a clinical indicator of the level of THC found within a sample of urine. THC is the main psychoactive chemical found in marijuana. A reading of 50 ng/ml or over is considered to be a *positive test* result while more than 0 but less 50 ng/ml suggests *trace amounts* of the drug within an individual's system. Test results are indicative of potency as well as recency and level of use. Higher levels typically correspond with heavy and/or frequent/regular use.

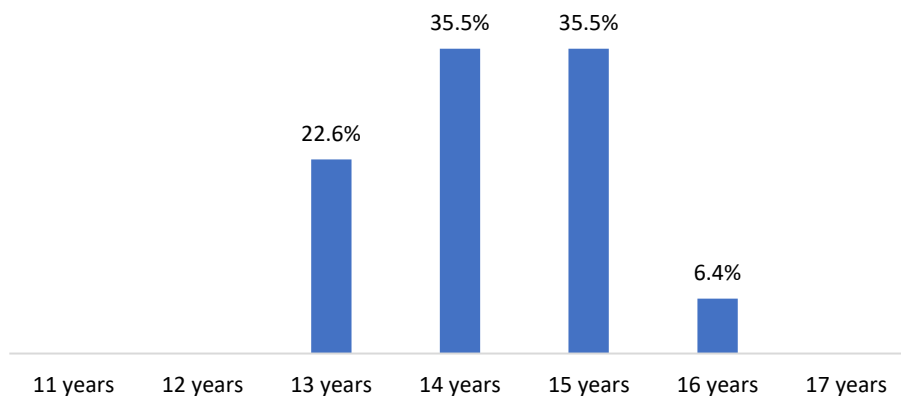
The profile of students testing positive for marijuana use/having trace amounts of the drug within their system in 2023 corresponds with the profile of students admitted to the Centre during that year i.e. they were primarily males ages 13 to 15 years (See Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5: Gender Distribution of Students Testing Positive for Marijuana Use on Admission to the Edna Nicholls Centre in 2023



Source: The Edna Nicholls Centre

Figure 6: Age Distribution of Students Testing Positive for Marijuana Use on Admission to the Edna Nicholls Centre in 2023

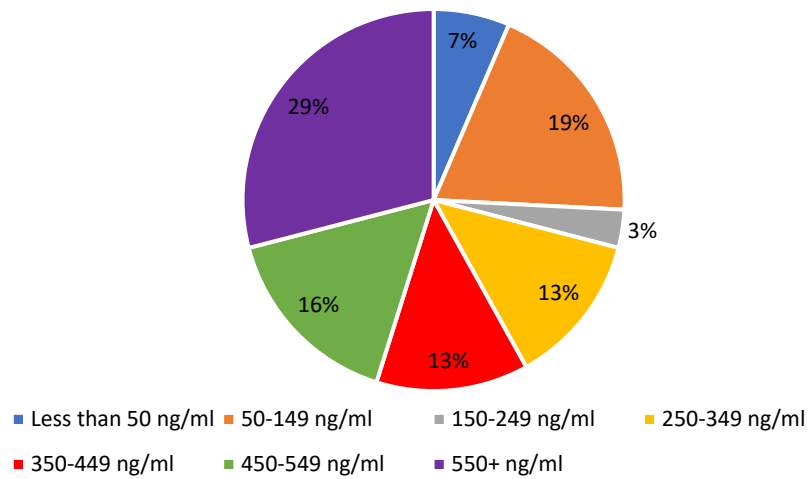


Source: The Edna Nicholls Centre

The THC levels for the students who tested positive for marijuana use or had trace amounts of the drug within their system are presented in Figure 7. From the Chart, it can be seen that 93% had THC levels of 50 ng/ml or higher while just under one third (29%) had levels of 550 ng/ml or higher. Overall, when compared to previous years, the test results show that there was a marked increase in the percentage of

students with higher THC levels in 2023. This is concerning as higher THC levels are indicative of recent and often frequent use, and may also suggest the use of high potency marijuana.

Figure 7: Distribution of Positive Marijuana Test Results for Students Admitted to the Edna Nicholls Centre in 2023



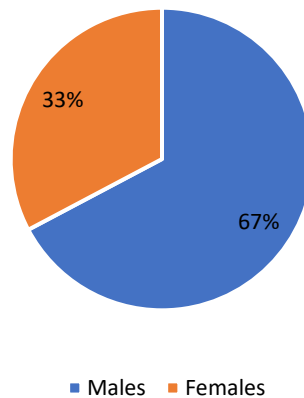
Source: The Edna Nicholls Centre

4. Treatment and Rehabilitation

4.1 The Psychiatric Hospital

A total of 901 patients were admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023, with males accounting for approximately two-thirds (67%) of all admissions during the period (See Figure 8).

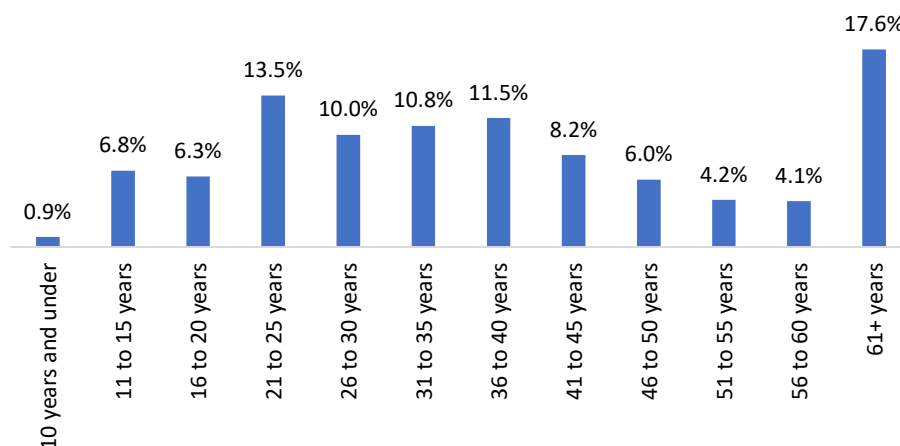
Figure 8: Gender Distribution of All Patients Admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

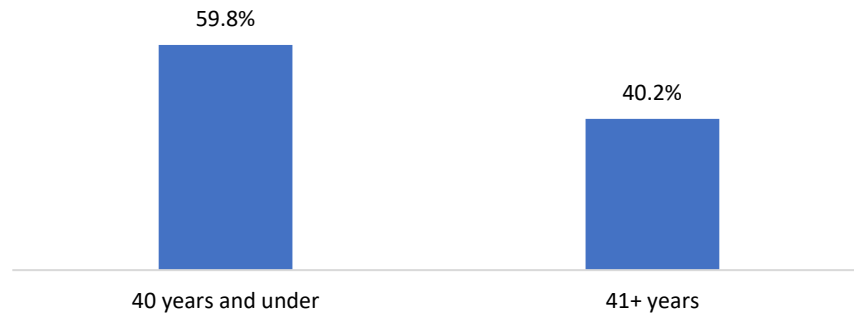
As in previous years, 2023 saw the admission of persons from across the lifespan, with the youngest being in the '10 and under' age group and the oldest in the '61 and over' age category (See Figure 9). From the distribution presented in Figure 9, it can be seen that the '61 and over' age category represented the single largest group of admissions. Despite this finding, the younger cohorts accounted for the majority of admissions, with six out of every 10 patients being aged 40 and under (See Figure 10).

Figure 9: Age Distribution of All Patients Admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 10: Age Distribution of All Patients Admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023: 40 and Under vs. 41 and Over

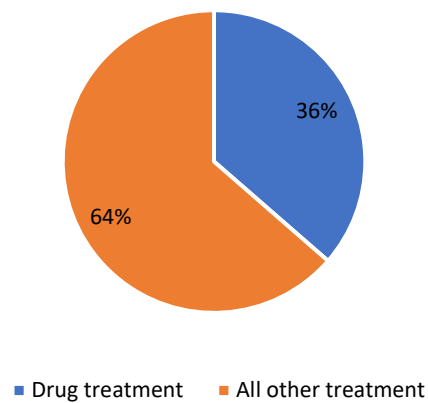


Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Admissions Related to Drug Use

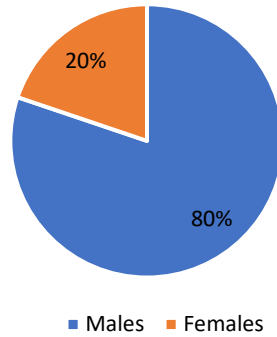
Just over one third (36%) of the patients admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023 sought drug treatment from that facility (See Figure 11), with males and persons aged 40 and under being the most likely to do so (See Figures 12 through 14). Additionally, Figure 13 shows that the admissions for drug treatment increased with age, peaking in the 21 to 25 age group and generally declining thereafter.

Figure 11: Patients Seeking Drug Treatment vs. All Other Treatment at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023



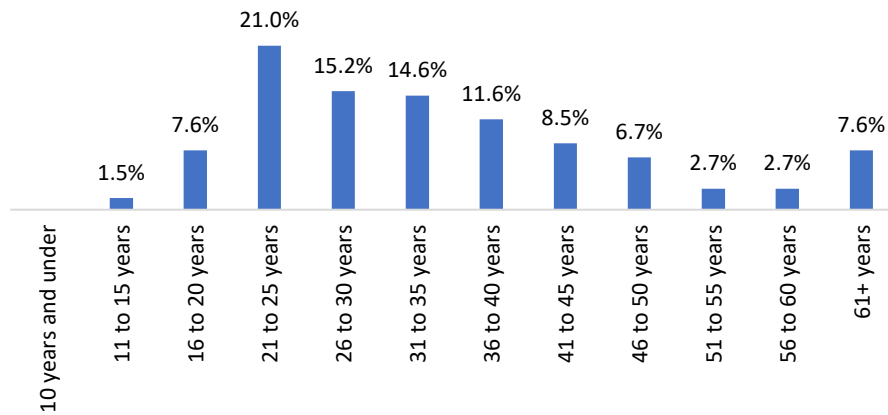
Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 12: Gender Distribution of Patients Seeking Drug Treatment at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023



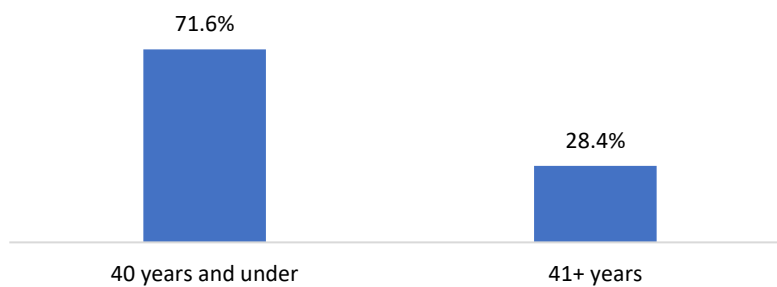
Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 13: Age Distribution of Patients Seeking Drug Treatment at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 14: Age Distribution of Patients Seeking Drug Treatment at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023: 40 and Under vs. 41 and Over

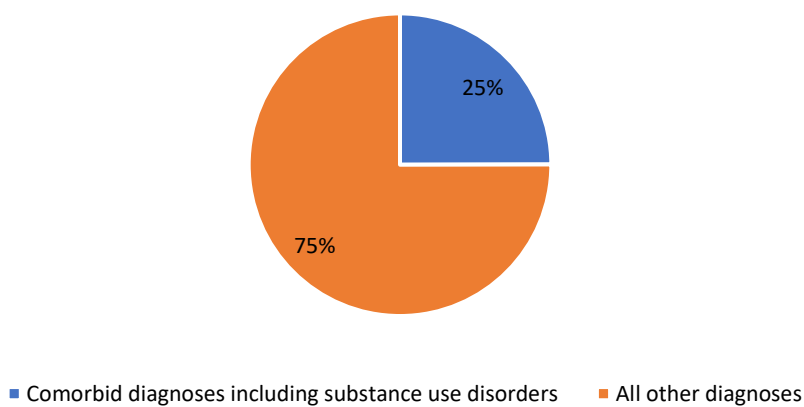


Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Comorbid Diagnoses Involving Substance Use Disorders

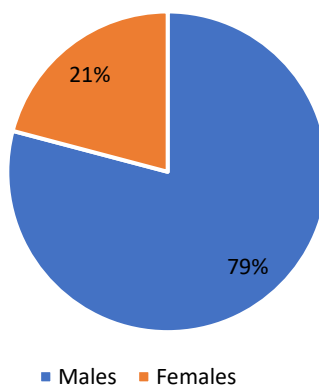
One quarter (25%) of all admissions to the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023 involved patients being treated for comorbid diagnoses which included a substance use disorder (See Figure 15). The majority of persons treated for such diagnoses were either male and/or in the 40 and under age category (See Figures 16 through 18). Additionally, it should be noted that the age distribution of drug-related comorbid diagnoses in Figure 17 nearly mirrors that of individuals receiving drug treatment at this facility in 2023, with comorbid diagnoses also peaking in the 21–25 age group and declining steadily afterward.

Figure 15: Comorbid Diagnoses vs. All Other Diagnoses at the Psychaitric Hospital in 2023



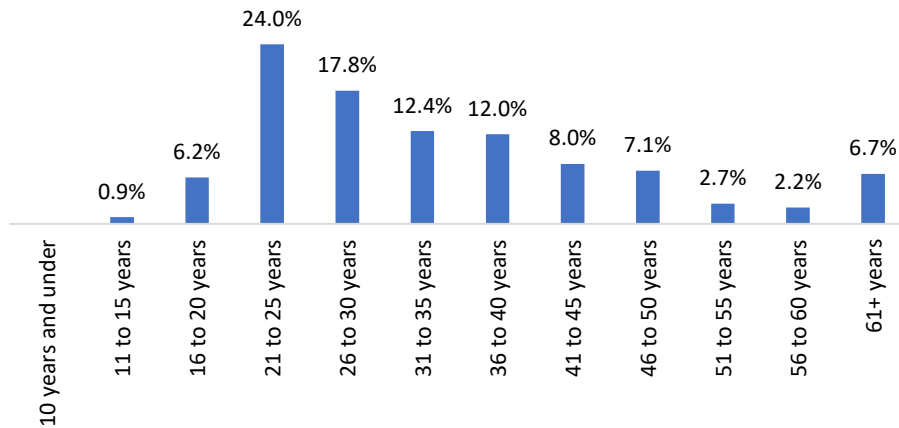
Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 16: Gender Distribution of Patients with Comorbid Diagnoses at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023



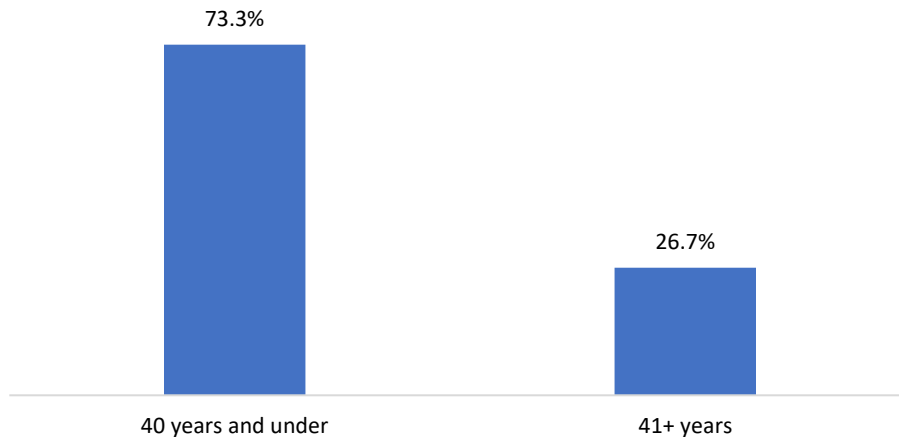
Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 17: Age Distribution of Patients with Comorbid Diagnoses at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 18: Age Distribution of Patients with Comorbid Diagnoses at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023



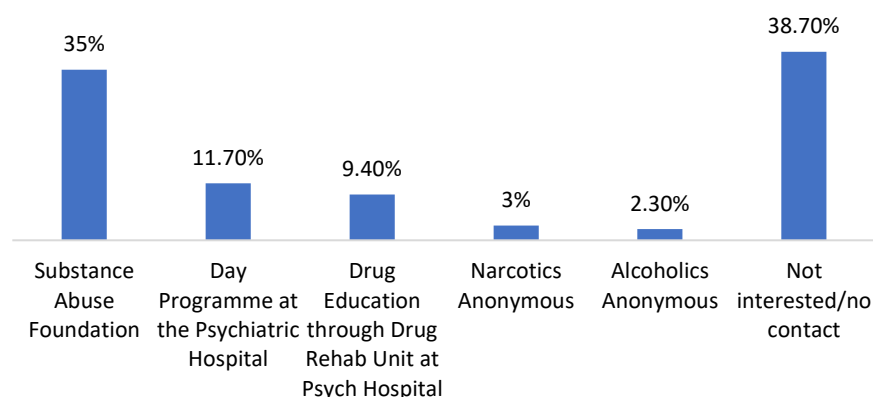
Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Drug Rehabilitation Unit

A total of 266 persons were assessed by the Drug Rehabilitation Unit (DRU) at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023. Based on the outcome of the assessments, persons were referred to appropriate drug treatment facilities/programmes. The distribution of these referrals is presented in Figure 19. From the Chart it can be seen that the Substance Abuse Foundation received the majority (35%) of referrals. Notably fewer persons were referred to either the Hospital's Day Programme (11.7%), Narcotics Anonymous (3.0%) or Alcoholics Anonymous (2.3%). The Chart also shows that 9.4% of those assessed received drug education

from the DRU while a large proportion (38.7%) were either not interested in receiving drug treatment or could not be reached following the initial assessment to arrange the start of counselling sessions⁷.

Figure 19: Distribution of Referrals Made by the Drug Rehabilitation Unit at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023

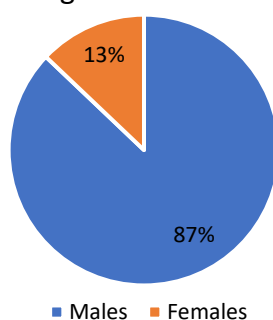


Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Demographic Profile of Persons Receiving Drug Treatment from the DRU

Thirty-one individuals were admitted to the DRU's Day Programme in 2023. As in previous years, males and persons in the 40 and under age category accounted for the majority of admissions (See Figures 20 through 22). Figure 21 also highlights the fact that persons in the 21 to 25 and 26 to 30 age groups were the most numerous, representing for 4.5 out of every 10 admissions to the Programme in 2023.

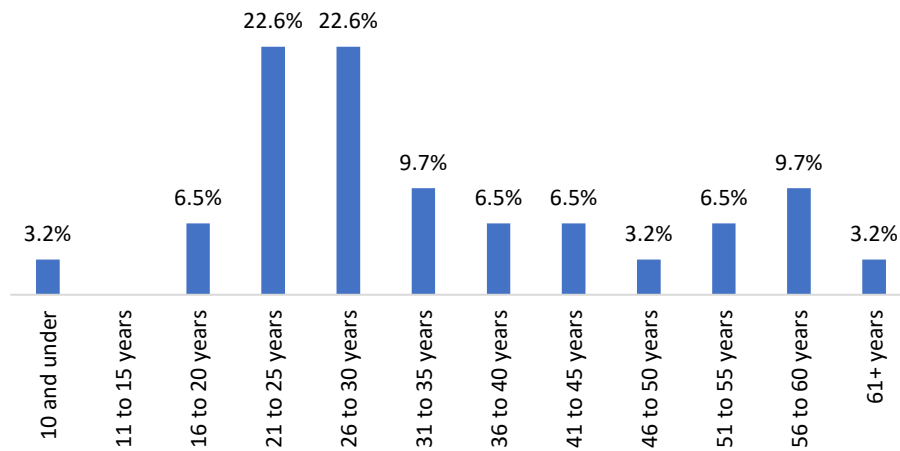
Figure 20: Gender Distribution of Clients Admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

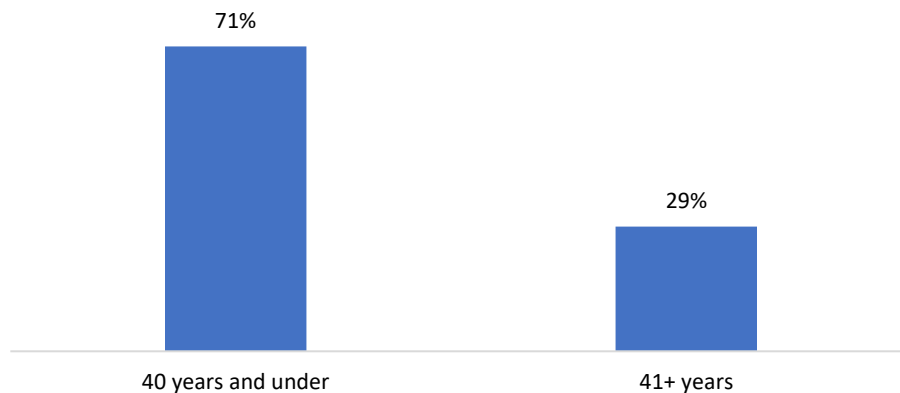
⁷ Following the onset of COVID-19, the Drug Rehabilitation Unit ceased in-person counselling and transitioned to telephone counselling in an effort to reduce the number of persons entering the Hospital compound. In order to receive drug counselling, persons must provide a valid telephone number where they can be reached. The Drug Rehabilitation Unit attempts to reach persons three times to initiate counselling sessions following assessment. If they cannot be reached within these three tries, no further attempts are made.

Figure 21: Age Distribution of Client's Admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 22: Age Distribution of Clients Admitted to the Day Programme at the Psychiatric Hospital in 2023: 40 and Under vs. 41 and Over

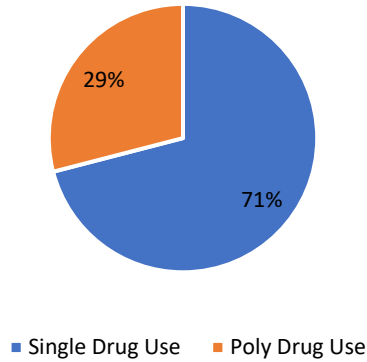


Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Drug Use Profile

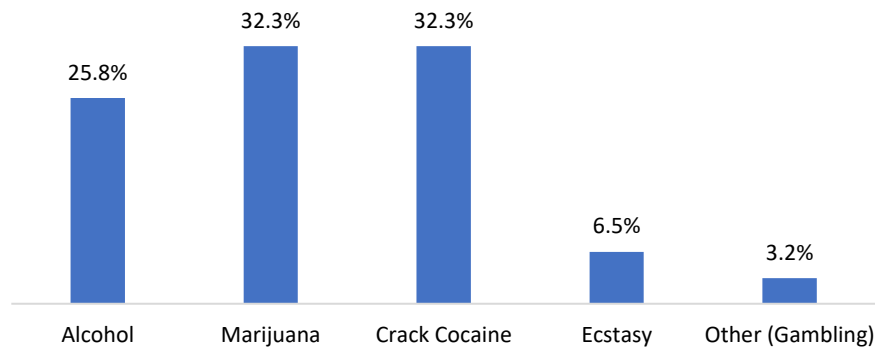
While most of the 2023 DRU day programme clients were treated for single drug use, approximately three out of every 10 (29%) were treated for polydrug use (See Figure 23). With regards to the drugs motivating the need for treatment, marijuana, crack cocaine and alcohol were the most common primary substances for which persons sought help (See Figure 24). A very small percentage sought treatment for their use of ecstasy (See Figure 24). There was also one client who sought treatment for gambling (See Figure 24).

Figure 23: Clients Seeking Treatment from the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023 for Single Drug Use vs. Poly Drug Use



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 24: Primary Drugs for which Treatment was Sought from the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023



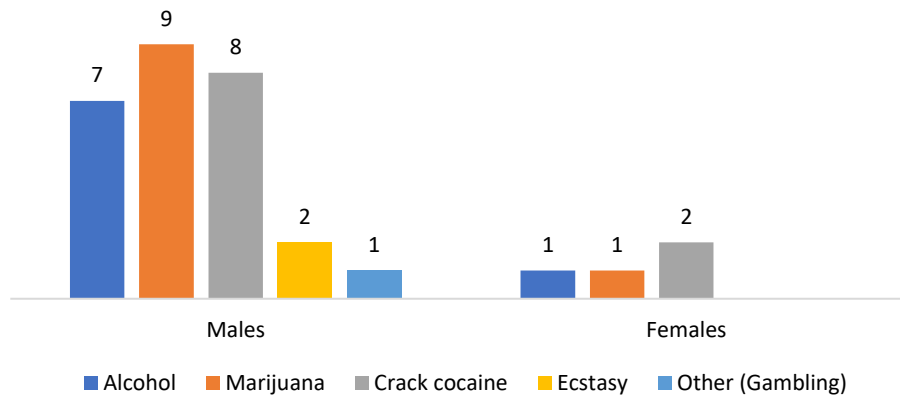
Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figures 25 and 26 present the primary drugs for which treatment was sought by gender and age. Figure 25 reveals that, in descending order, marijuana, crack cocaine and alcohol were the top three substances for which males were treated. The Chart also shows that both ecstasy cases involved males, and that the lone individual treated for gambling was male. There were only three primary drugs recorded for females: crack cocaine, marijuana and alcohol (See Figure 25).

With regards to age, marijuana and crack cocaine were the most common substances motivating the need for treatment among those 40 and under (See Figure 26). Also noteworthy is the fact that both individuals treated for ecstasy use were in the 40 and under age category (See Figure 26). For those 41

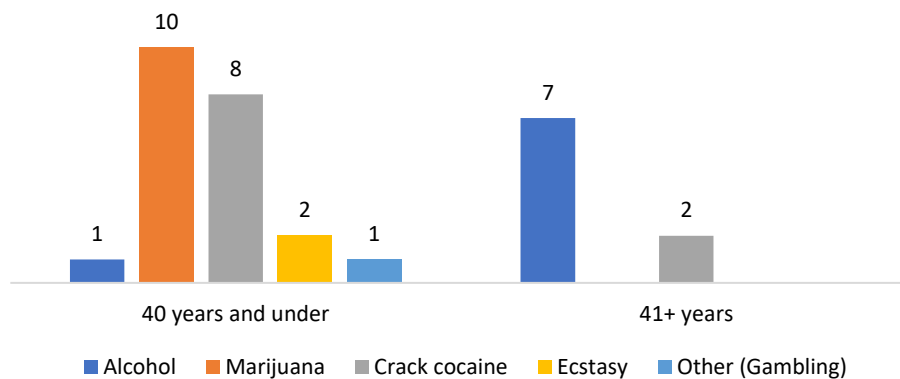
and over, alcohol was the most problematic substance, accounting for 7 of the 9 admissions within this group (See Figure 26). The remaining two persons were treated for crack cocaine use (See Figure 26).

Figure 25: Primary Drugs for which Treatment was Sought from the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023 by Gender



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

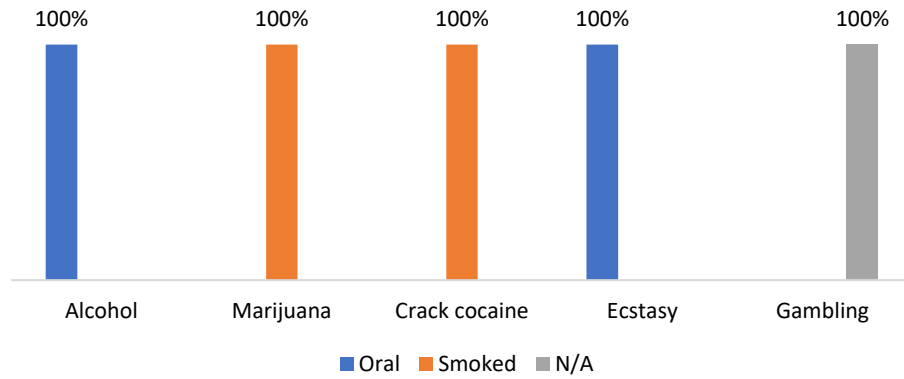
Figure 26: Primary Drugs for which Treatment was Sought at the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023 by Age



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

The main methods of administration for primary drugs used by clients are presented in Figure 27. From the Chart it can be seen that both alcohol and ecstasy were consumed orally while marijuana and crack cocaine were smoked.

Figure 27: Most Frequent Method of Administration for Primary Drugs Used by Clients Seeking Treatment at the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023

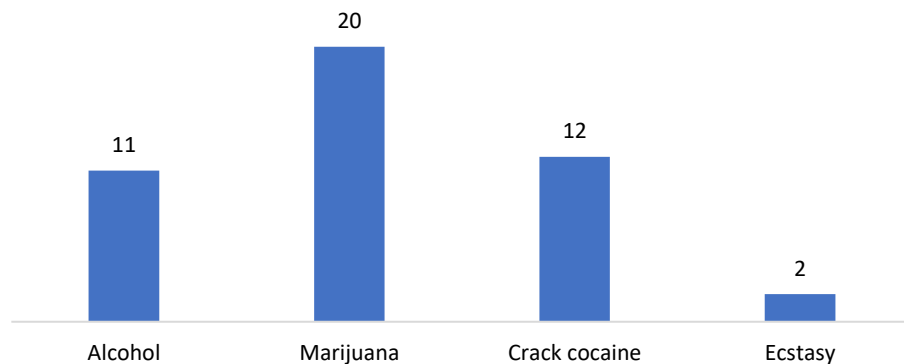


Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Recent Drug Use History

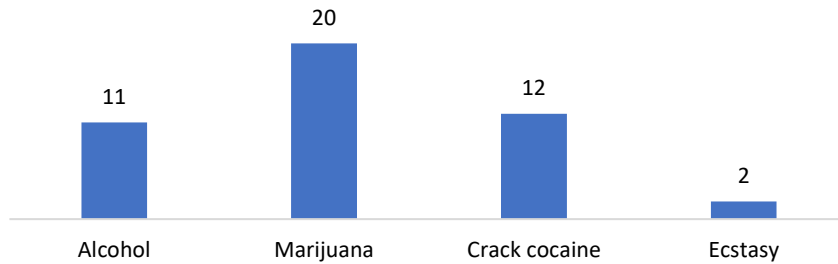
Client reports of drug use in the year and month preceding treatment entry are presented in Figures 28 through 33. An initial examination of the Charts reveals that the data for both time periods is identical, with marijuana being the most commonly used substance followed by crack cocaine and alcohol (See Figures 28 and 29). Only two persons reported ecstasy use during the one year and one month lead up (See Figures 28 and 29).

Figure 28: Drugs Used in the Past 12 Months by Clients Seeking Treatment from the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

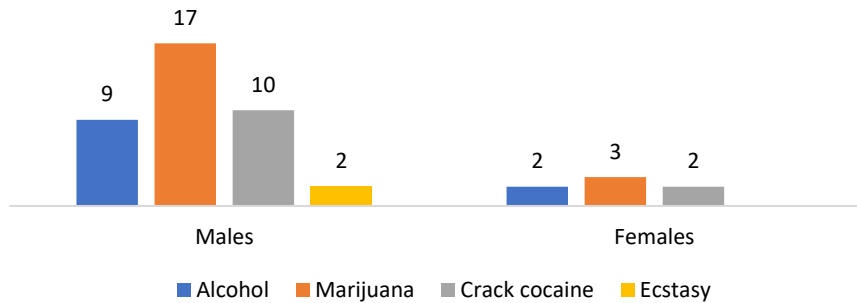
Figure 29: Drugs Used in the Past 30 Days by Clients Seeking Treatment from the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

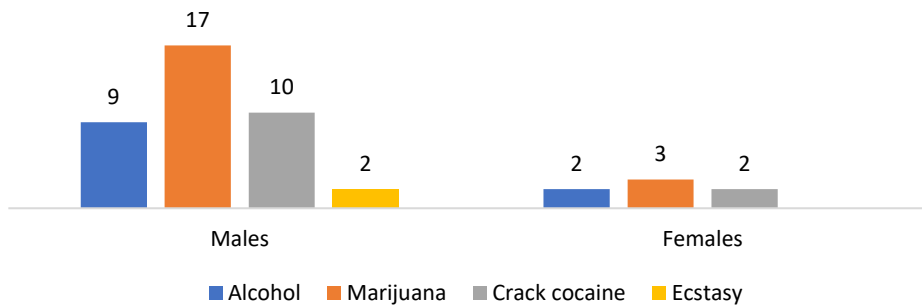
When gender was considered, Figures 30 and 31 reveal that marijuana, crack cocaine and alcohol were used by both males and females in the year and month before entering treatment. In addition to these three substances, two males also reported the use of ecstasy (See Figures 30 and 31).

Figure 30: Gender Distribution of Drugs Used in the Past 12 Months by Clients Seeking Treatment from the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

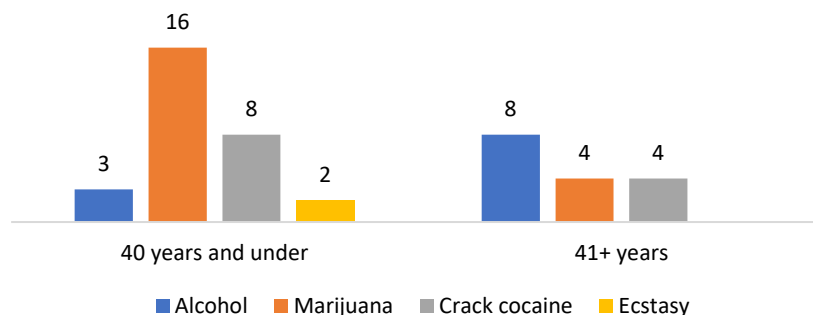
Figure 31: Gender Distribution of Drugs Used in the Past 30 Days by Clients Seeking Treatment from the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

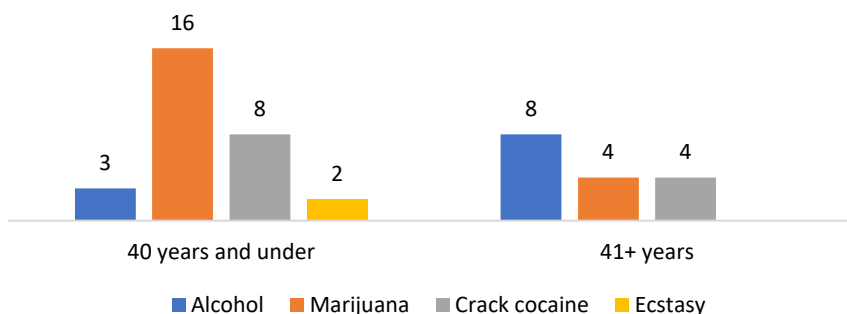
In terms of age, marijuana was the most widely used substance among younger clients (ages 40 and under) prior to treatment entry while alcohol was the substance used most often by those 41 and over (See Figures 32 and 33). Also noteworthy is the use of ecstasy by those in the 40 and under age group (See Figures 32 and 33).

Figure 32: Age Distribution of Drugs Used in the Past 12 Months by Clients Seeking Treatment from the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 33: Age Distribution of Drugs Used on the Past 30 Days by Clients Seeking Treatment from the Psychiatric Hospital's Day Programme in 2023

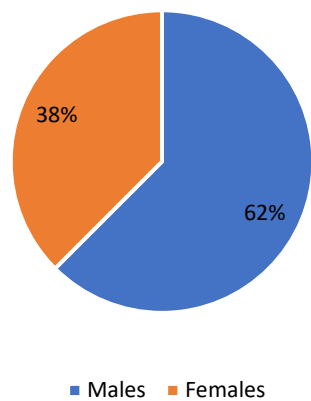


Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Thrive Family Centre

Eighty young people (ages 17 and under) were admitted to the Thrive Family Centre for the treatment of behavioural problems in 2023. Almost two-thirds (62%) of those admitted were male (See Figure 34).

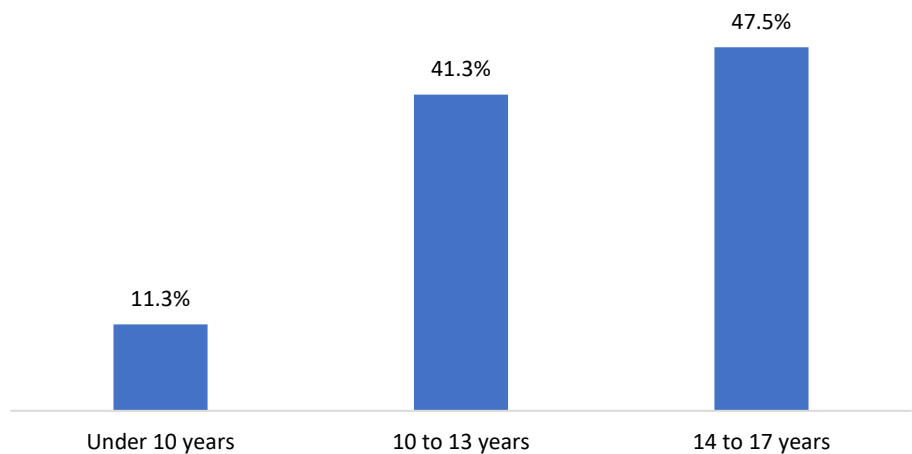
Figure 34: Gender Distribution of Patients Admitted to the Thrive Family Centre in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 35 shows that most persons admitted were between the ages of 10 and 17 years. The Chart also shows that admissions increased with age. As such, the 14 to 17 age category was the single largest, accounting for just under half of the admissions during the year.

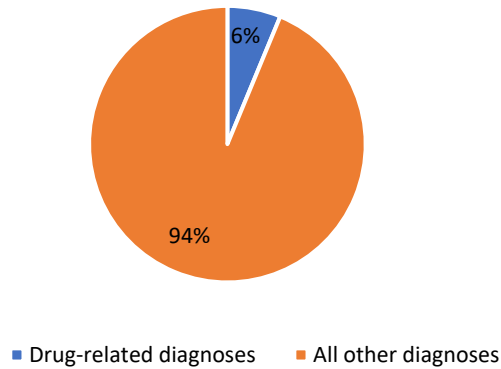
Figure 35: Age Distribution of Patients Admitted to the Thrive Family Centre in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Five of the 80 persons admitted to the Thrive Family Centre during the period under review were treated for drug-related diagnoses (See Figure 36), most of whom were males (See Figure 37). Figure 38 reveals that the frequency of such diagnoses increased with age, making older children more likely to receive a drug-related diagnosis. As such, three of the five children (60%) treated for drug-related diagnoses were in the 14 to 17 age group. It should be noted that marijuana was the primary drug of choice for all drug-related cases, regardless of age or gender.

Figure 36: Drug-related Diagnoses vs. All Other Diagnoses Among Patients Admitted to Thrive Family Centre in 2023



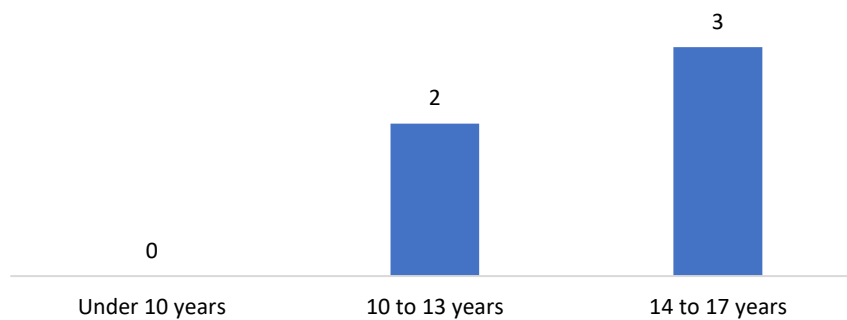
Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 37: Gender Distribution of Patients Admitted to the Thrive Family Centre for Drug-related Diagnoses in 2023



Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

Figure 38: Age Distribution of Patients Admitted to the Thrive Family Centre for Drug-related Diagnoses in 2023

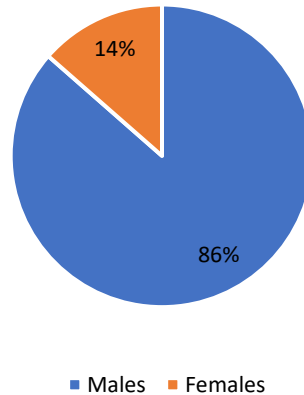


Source: The Psychiatric Hospital

4.2 Substance Abuse Foundation

A total of 96 persons sought treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation⁸ in 2023, the majority of whom were males (See Figure 39).

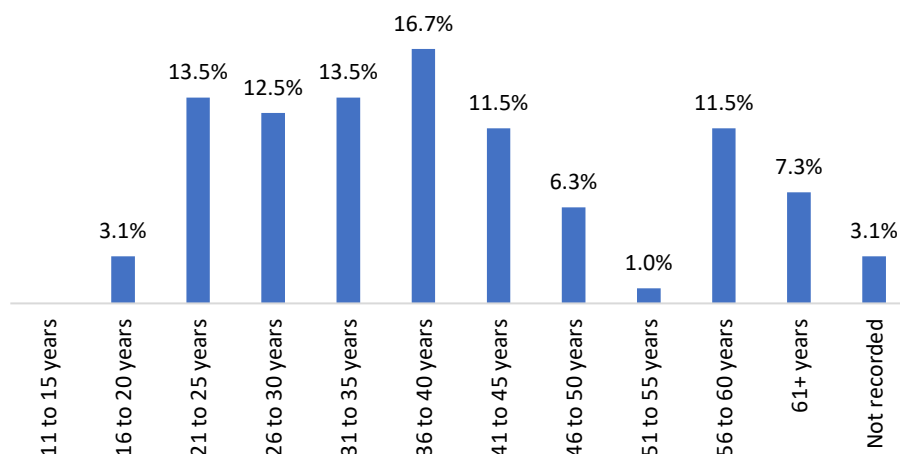
Figure 39: Gender Distribution of Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023



Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

While clients of various ages were treated at the SAF during the stated period (See Figure 40), Figure 41 highlights the fact that clients were more likely to be younger, as approximately six out of every 10 were age 40 and under.

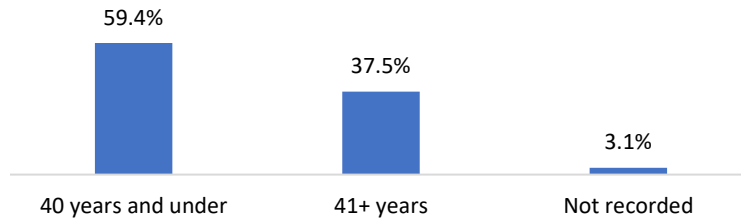
Figure 40: Age Distribution of Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023



Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

⁸ The Substance Abuse Foundation Inc. comprises of 2 treatment facilities: Verdun House and Marina House. Verdun House caters to males 18 years of age and older while Marina House caters to females 18 years and over.

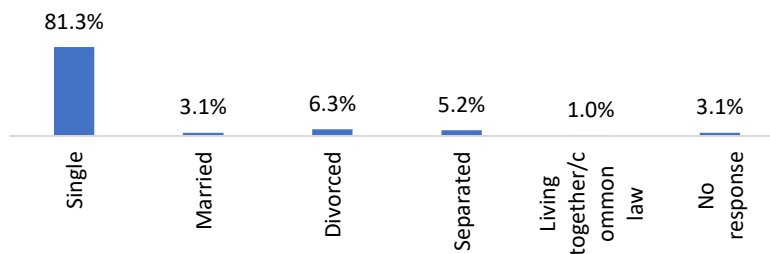
Figure 41: Age Distribution of Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023: 40 and under vs. 41 and Over



Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Additional demographic information is presented in Figures 42 through 46. From the Charts, it can be seen that the clients were primarily single, had no dependents and lived in their family home (See Figures 42, 43 and 44). With regards to the highest level of educational attainment achieved, most persons reported having either an incomplete or complete secondary school education (See Figure 45). Approximately six out of every 10 persons were unemployed and looking for work (See Figure 46).

Figure 42: Relationship Status of Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023



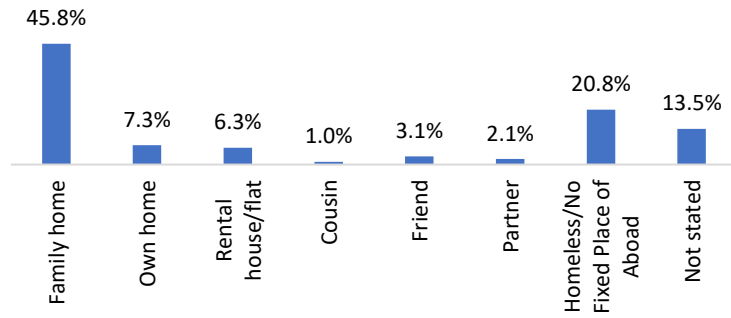
Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Figure 43: Distribution of Persons With and Without Dependents Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023



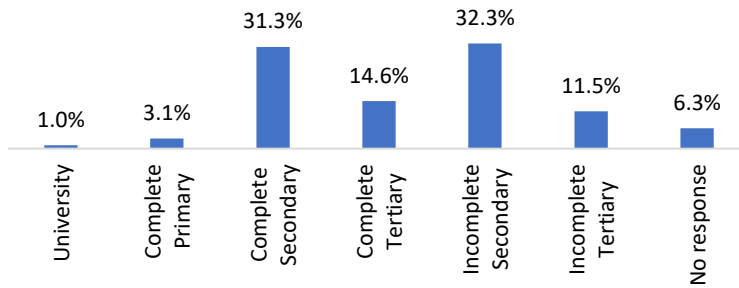
Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Figure 44: Living Arrangements of Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023



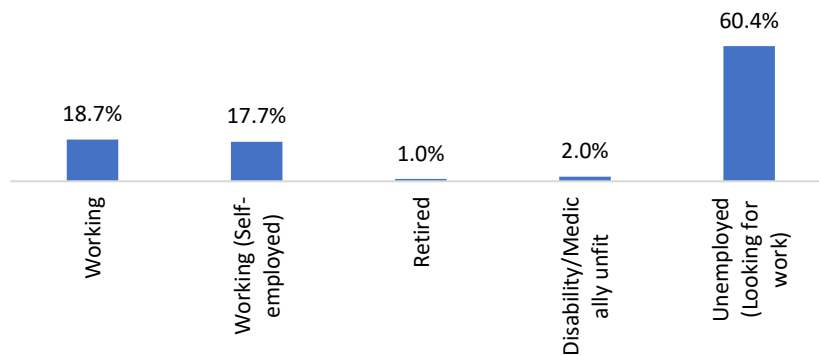
Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Figure 45: Highest Level of Education Attained by Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023



Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Figure 46: Employment Status of Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023

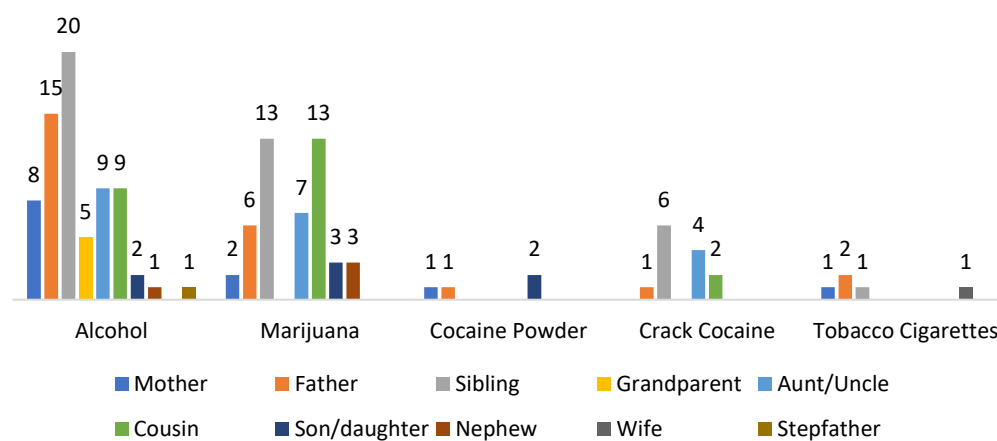


Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Family History of Drug Use

Most clients reported a family history of drug use, with alcohol and marijuana being the substances most commonly used by their relatives (See Figure 47). Fewer persons noted a family history of cocaine (crack/powdered) or tobacco use (See Figure 47). While persons noted drug use by both immediate and extended family members, drug use by parents, siblings and offspring was generally more common across drug types (See Figure 47).

Figure 47: Family History of Drug Use among Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023

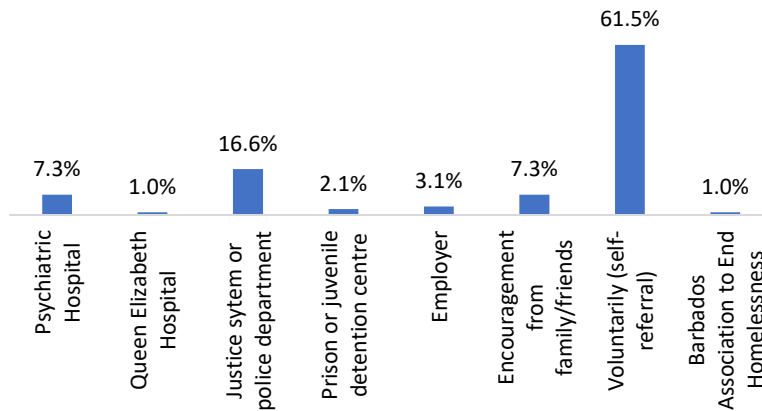


Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Treatment Referral

Figure 48 presents the referral sources for those treated at the SAF in 2023. From the Chart it can be seen that most persons (61.5%) sought treatment of their own volition i.e. they were self-referred. This was distantly followed by those who were referred by the justice system/police department (16.6%) and the Psychiatric Hospital (7.3%), or whose who were encourage to seek help by family and friends (7.3%) (See Figure 48). A small number of referrals were also received from employers, the prison/juvenile detention centre, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital or the Barbados Association to End Homelessness (See Figure 48)

Figure 48: Sources of Referral for Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023

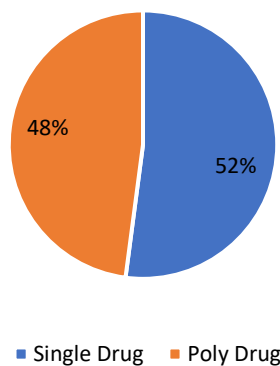


Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Drug Treatment Profile

There was a near even distribution of persons seeking treatment for single versus poly drug use in 2023. Nevertheless, the single drug users (52%) slightly outnumbered the poly drug users (48%) (See Figure 49).

Figure 49: Distribution of Persons Seeking Treatment for Single Drug vs. Poly Drug Use at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023

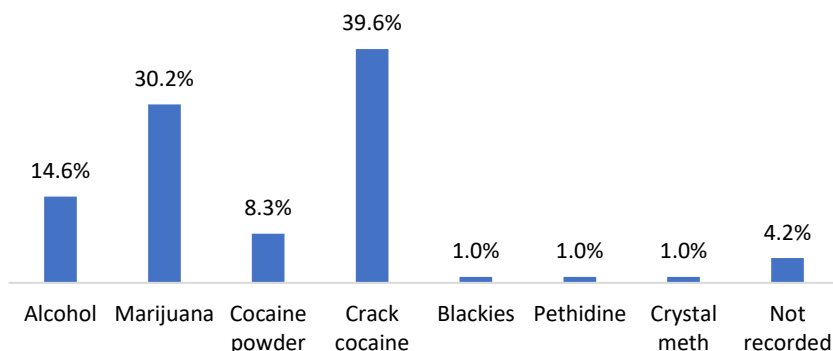


Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

All drug users, including those who use multiple substances have a primary drug of choice. As such, the primary drugs motivating the need for treatment among SAF's 2023 clients are presented in Figure 50. From the Chart, it can be seen that crack cocaine, marijuana and alcohol were the three frontrunners.

Fewer persons sought treatment for cocaine powder, blackies, pethidine and crystal meth (See Figure 50).

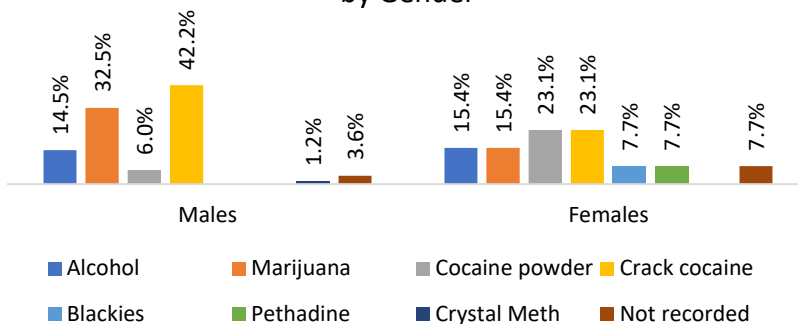
Figure 50: Primary Drugs for which Treatment was Sought at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023



Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

The primary drugs were analyzed by gender and age. Figure 51 reveals that crack cocaine, marijuana and alcohol remained the most common primary drugs for males, and in that order. However, for females, crack cocaine and cocaine powder were the most common, and they were reported with equal frequency (23.1% each) (See Figure 51). These were followed by alcohol and marijuana, both of which were identified as primary substances by 15.4% of the female clientele (See Figure 51). It should be noted that only females reported seeking treatment for pethidine or blackies while only males sought treatment for crystal meth (See Figure 51).

Figure 51: Primary Drugs for which Treatment was Sought at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023 by Gender

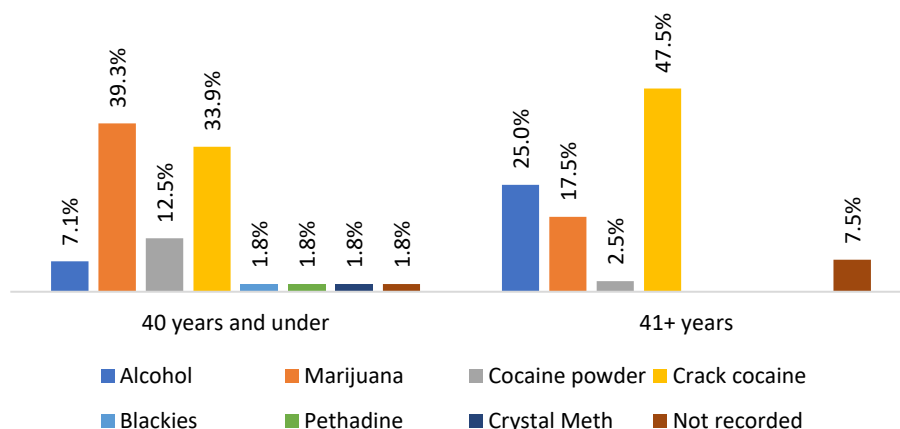


Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

With regards to age, marijuana and crack cocaine were the main drugs of choice for those in the 40 and under age category, while crack cocaine was the most common primary drug among those 41 and over

(See Figure 52). Figure 52 also shows that only persons in the 40 and under age group sought treatment for blackies, pethidine and crystal meth.

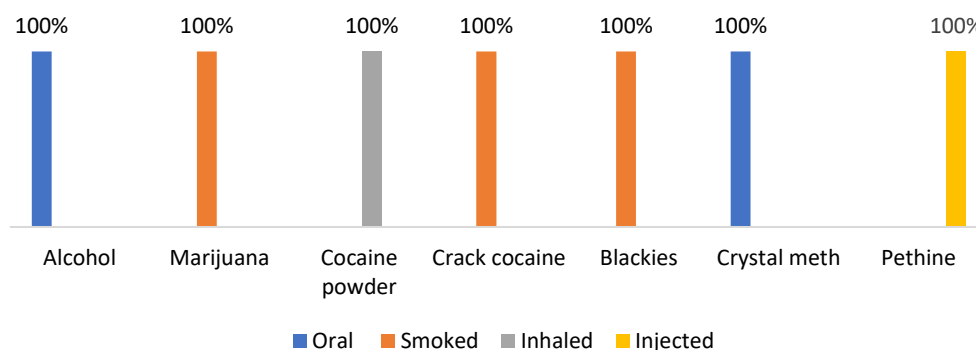
Figure 52: Primary Drugs for which Treatment was Sought at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023 by Age



Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Figure 53 presents the most frequent methods used by clients to administer their primary drugs. From the Chart it can be seen that all persons treated for the use of alcohol and crystal meth consumed these substances orally while smoking was the method of choice for all clients treated for the use of marijuana, crack cocaine and blackies. Cocaine powdered was inhaled and pethidine was injected.

Figure 53: Most Frequent Method of Drug Administration for Primary Drugs Among Persons Seeking Treatment at the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023

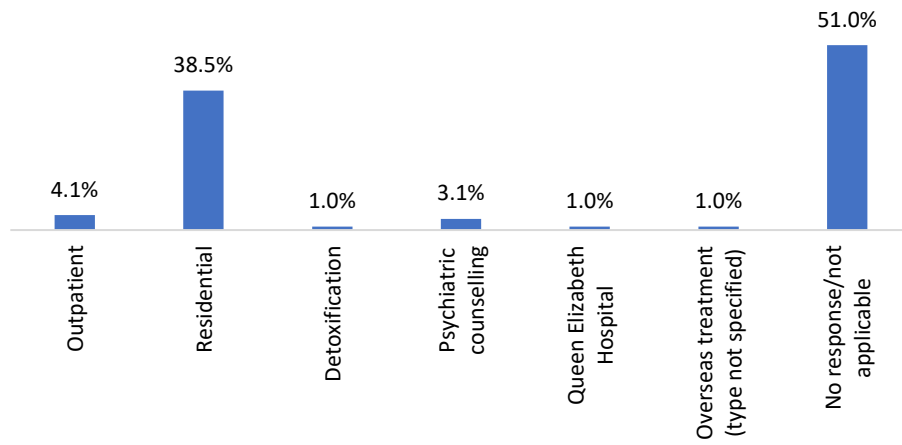


Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

Most Recent Treatment

Approximately half of the clients reported receiving previous drug treatment, with residential being the most recent type of treatment reported by most persons (See Figure 54)

Figure 54: Most Recent Type of Treatment Prior to Clients' Admission to the Substance Abuse Foundation in 2023

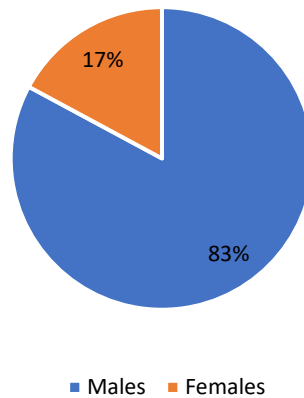


Source: The Substance Abuse Foundation

4.3 Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

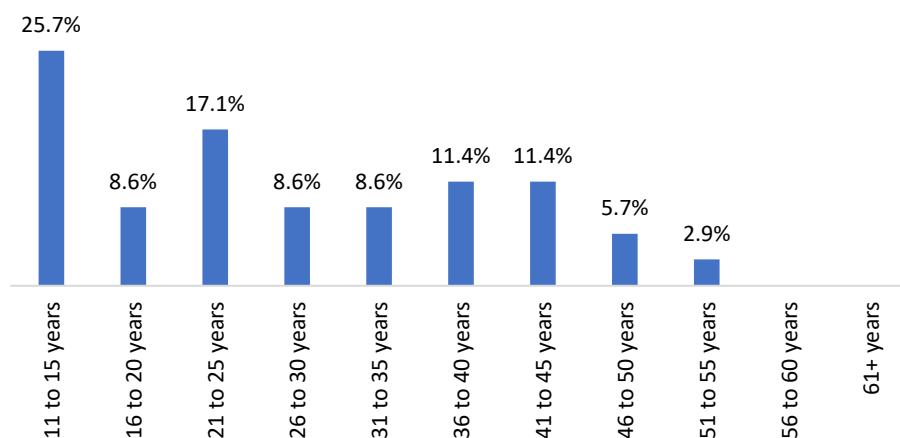
Thirty-five persons received drug treatment at the Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives (CASA) in 2023. As in previous years, males and persons 40 years and under accounted for the majority of admissions during the period under review (See Figures 55 and 56).

Figure 55: Gender Distribution of Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

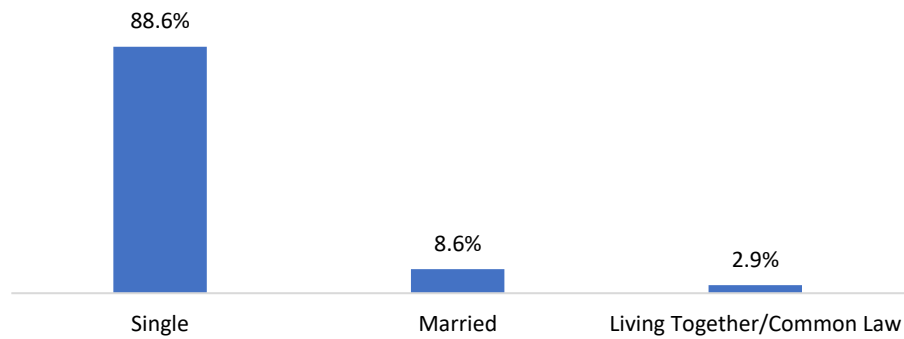
Figure 56: Age Distribution of Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Figures 57, 58 and 59 also reveal that most clients were single, had dependents and lived in their family homes.

Figure 57: Relationship Status of Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023



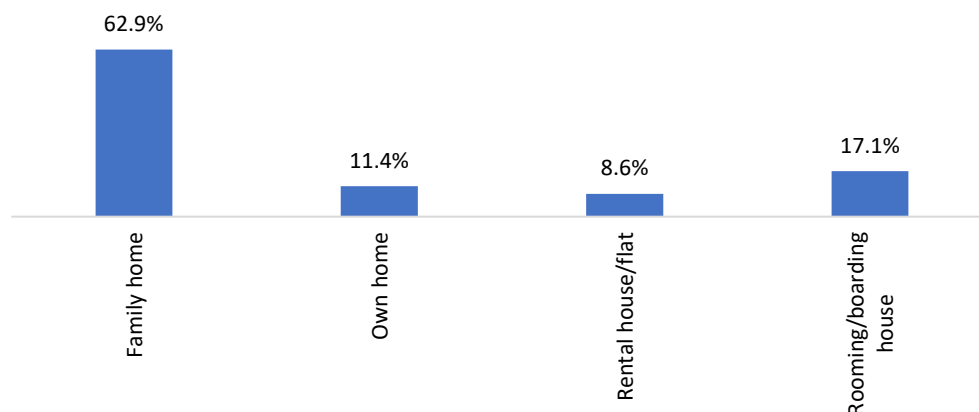
Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Figure 58: Distribution of Persons With and Without Dependents Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

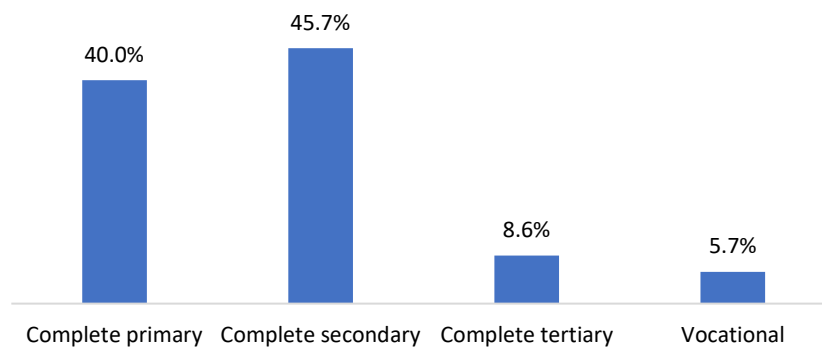
Figure 59: Living Arrangements of Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

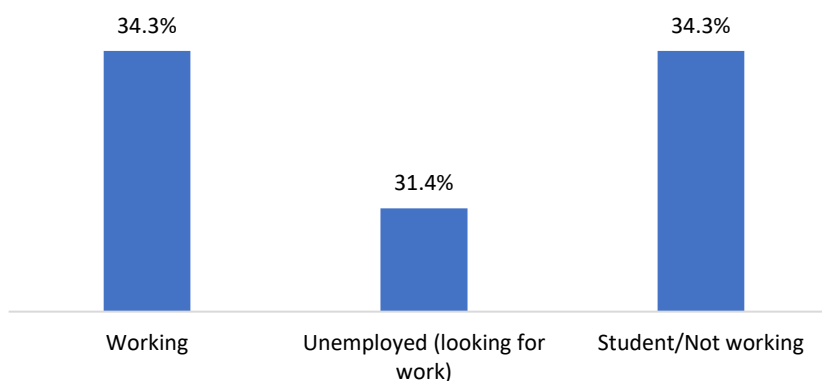
While just under half of the clients (45.7%) had attained a secondary school education, a somewhat similar percentage (40%) reported 'complete primary' as their highest level education attained to date (See Figure 60). It is possible that this percentage may have been influenced by the large proportion of school-aged students who were among the 2023 clientele. This assumption is supported by the data in Figure 61 which shows that approximately one-third of the clients (34.3%) were not working due to the fact that they were students. An equal proportion (34.3%) indicated that they were working at the time of intake while 31.4% were unemployed and looking for work.

Figure 60: Highest Level of Education Attained by Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Figure 61: Employment Status of Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023

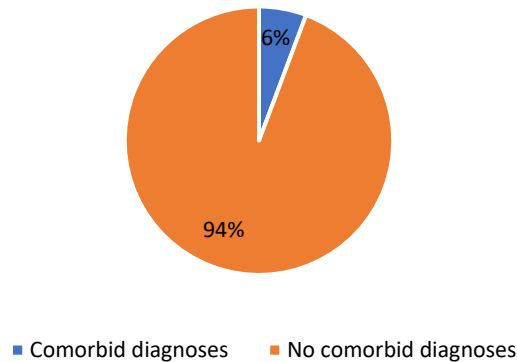


Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Psychiatric History

While most clients treated at CASA in 2023 did not have a psychiatric history, a small percentage (6%) reported having a comorbid mental health and substance use disorder (See Figure 62).

Figure 62: Distribution of Persons with Comorbid Diagnoses vs. Those without Comorbid Diagnoses who Sought Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023

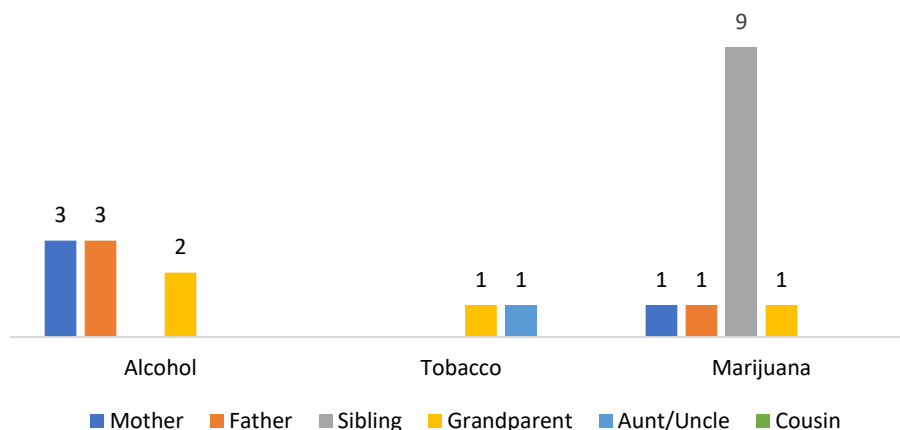


Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Family History of Drug Use

Clients indicated a family history of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use, with marijuana being the substance most commonly used by family members (See Figure 63). Reports of drug use by *immediate* family members (i.e. parents and siblings) were most common (See Figure 63).

Figure 63: Family History of Drug Use Among Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023

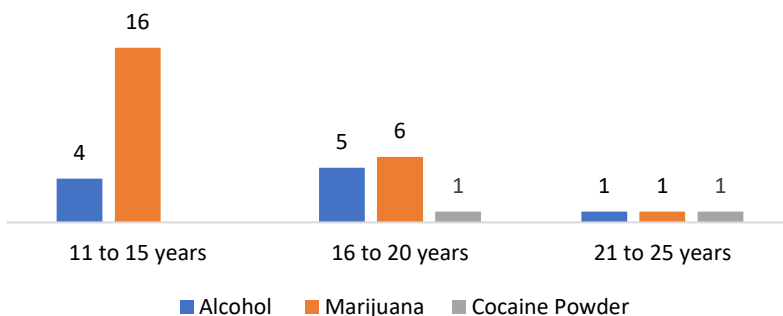


Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Client History of Drug Use

Figure 64 presents clients' age of first drug use by drug type. From the Chart it can be seen that marijuana was the most common drug of first use with most persons initiating use by the age of 15.

Figure 64: Age of First Drug Use by Drug Type for Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023

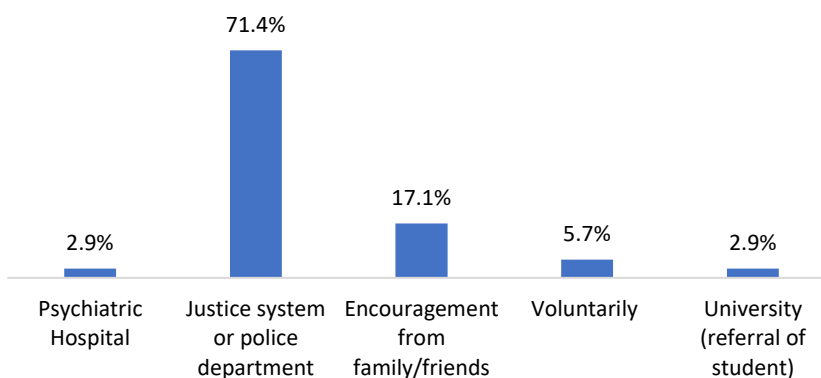


Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Treatment Referral

The majority of clients treated at CASA in 2023 were referred by the justice system or police department (See Figure 65). Few persons sought treatment at a result of encouragement by family and friends or referrals from other sources e.g. Psychiatric Hospital, University (See Figure 65).

Figure 65: Sources of Referral for Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023

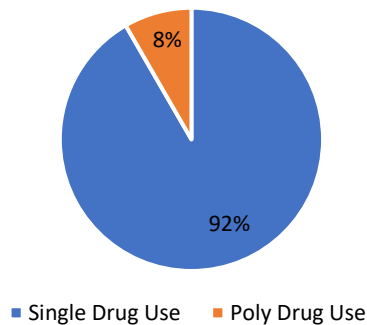


Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Drug Treatment Profile

From Figure 66 it can be seen that while most clients were treated for single drug use, there was a small percentage (8%) that was treated for the use of multiple substances.

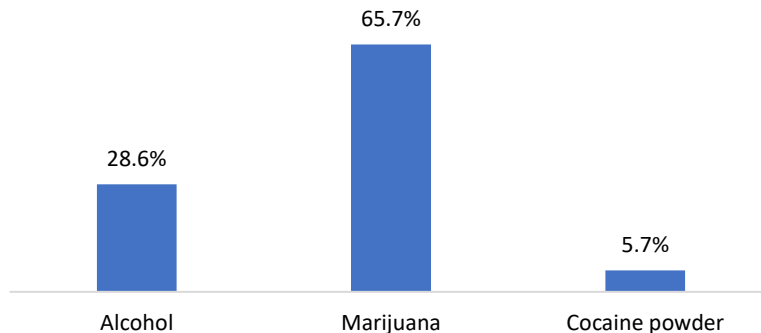
Figure 66: Distribution of Persons Seeking Treatment for Single vs. Poly Drug Use at CASA in 2023



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Only three primary drugs were identified by clients during 2023. In order of frequency, these were: marijuana, alcohol and cocaine powder (See Figure 67).

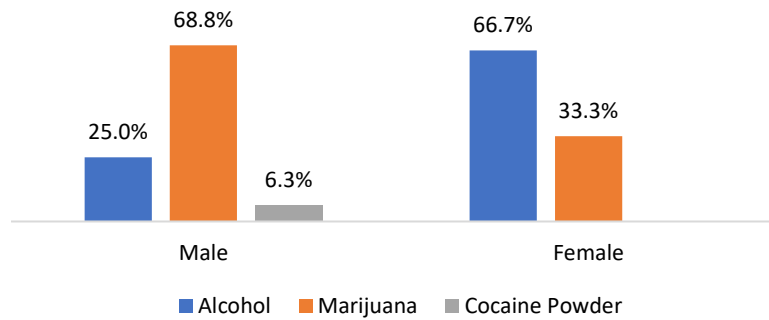
Figure 67: Primary Drugs for which Treatment was Sought at CASA in 2023



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

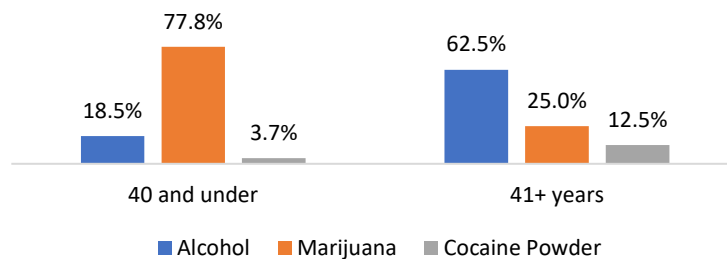
When the primary drug data was analysed by gender, marijuana remained the most common primary drug among males followed by alcohol and crack cocaine. For females, alcohol was the most common drug of choice followed by marijuana. Only males sought treatment for cocaine powder. With regards to age, marijuana was the most common primary drug for those 40 years and under while alcohol was the most problematic substance for those 41 and over.

Figure 68: Primary Drugs for which Treatment was Sought at CASA in 2023 by Gender



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

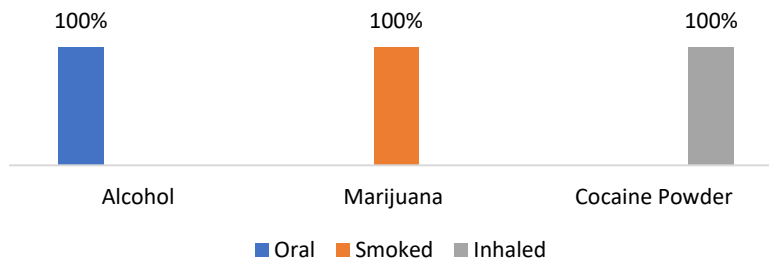
Figure 69: Primary Drugs for which Treatment was Sought at CASA in 2023 by Age



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

When asked to indicate the most frequently used method of administration for their drug of choice, all alcohol users reported consuming the substance orally (See Figure 70). Similarly, smoking was the only method identified for marijuana and inhalation was the only method identified for cocaine powder (See Figure 70).

Figure 70: Most Frequent Method of Administration for Primary Drugs Used by Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023

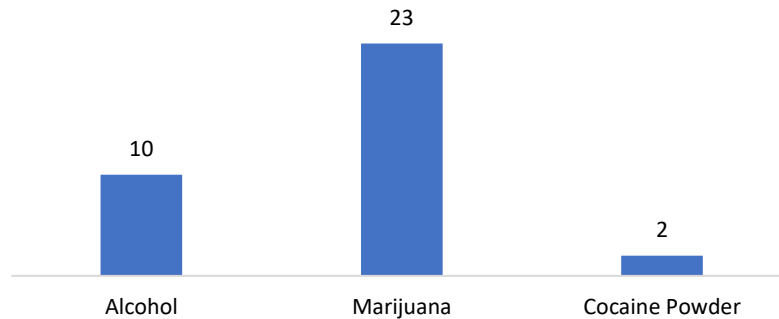


Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Recent Drug Use

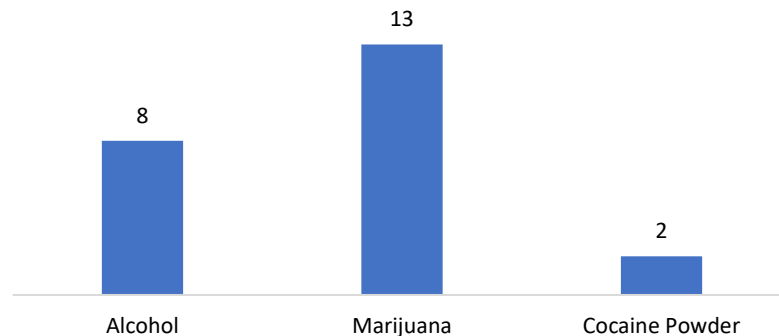
In the year and month preceding treatment entry, clients were most likely to have used marijuana, alcohol and cocaine powder (See Figures 71 and 72). Figures 71 and 72 display the reported frequencies for the use of these substances during the 12 month and 30 day lead-up periods. The distribution is identical in both Charts.

Figure 71: Drugs in the Past 12 Months by Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA in 2023



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

Figure 72: Drugs Used in the Past 30 Days by Persons Seeking Drug Treatment at CASA



Source: Centre for Counselling Addiction Support Alternatives

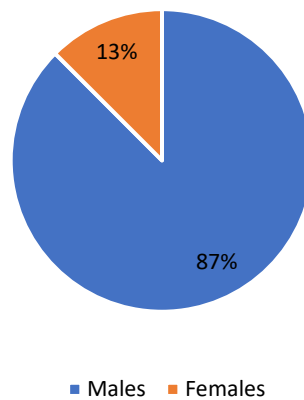
Most Recent Treatment

Only 2 (5.7%) clients reported receiving drug treatment prior to their admission in 2023. In both instances, the individuals received psychiatric counselling.

4.4 National Council on Substance Abuse

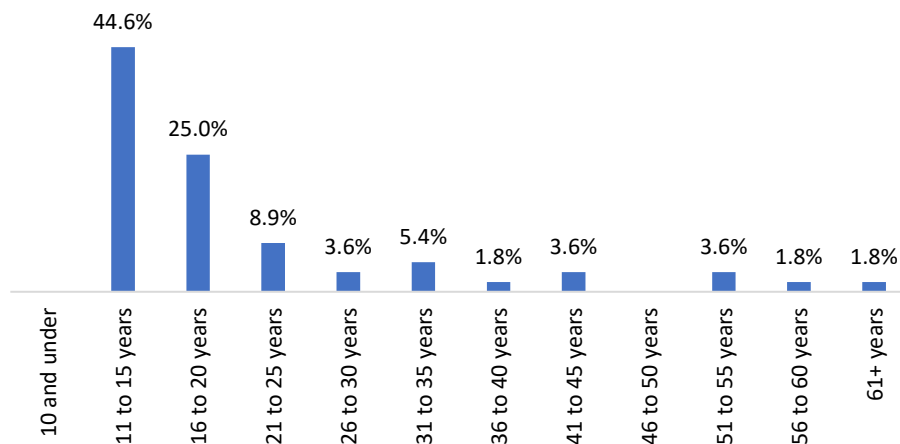
A total of 56 intake sessions was conducted by the Counselling Department at the NCSA in 2023. The majority of persons assessed by the Counselling staff were males and persons under the age of 20 (See Figures 73 and 74).

Figure 73: Gender Distribution of Clients Assessed at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

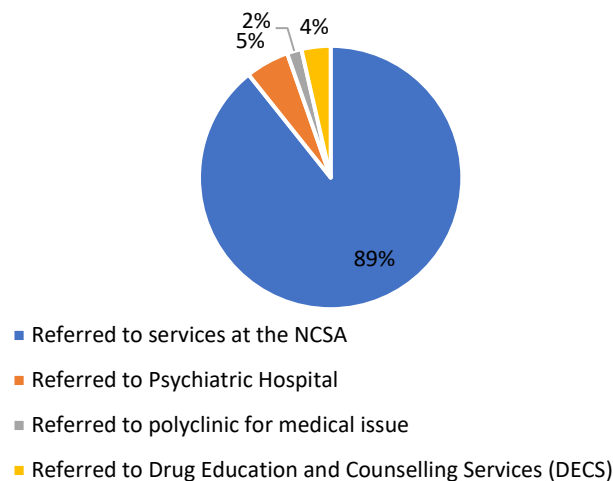
Figure 74: Age Distribution of Clients Assessed at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Following assessment, most individuals (89%) were referred for services at the NCSA. Only a small number (11%) of referrals was made to external agencies (See Figure 75).

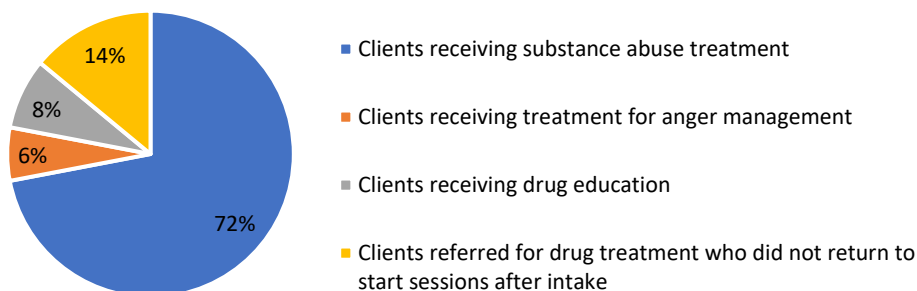
Figure 75: Distribution of Clients Assessed at the NCSA in 2023 by Referral Source



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 76 reveals that the majority of persons treated at the NCSA received substance abuse treatment. Few persons received drug education (8%) or counselling for anger management issues (6%) (See Figure 76). It should be noted that 14% of persons who were referred for drug treatment did not return to start sessions after their initial assessment (See Figure 76)

Figure 76: Distribution of NCSA Counselling Clients in 2023 by Type of Counselling/Service Received

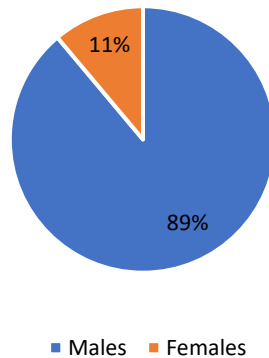


Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Demographic Profile of Drug Treatment Clients

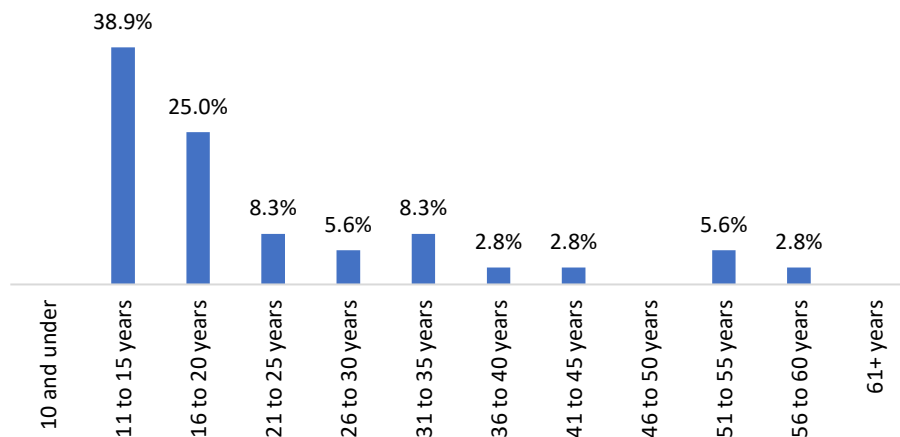
Much like those assessed by the Counselling department, those receiving drug treatment were also primarily males and persons 20 years and under (See Figure 77 and 78).

Figure 77: Gender Distribution of Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 78: Age Distribution Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023

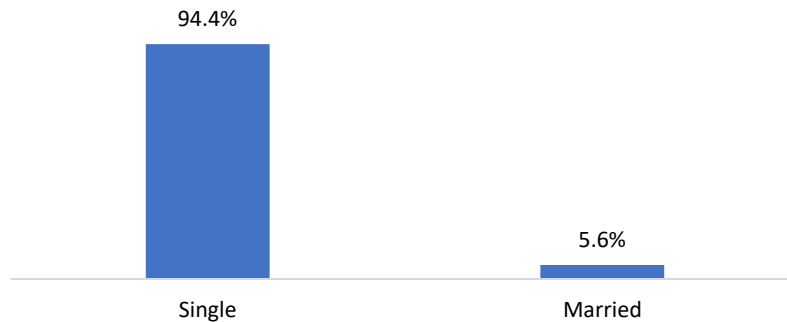


Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Additional demographic details are presented in Figures 79 through 83, and these correspond with the relatively young age of the clients treated during the target period. From the Charts, it can be seen that they were mostly single, had no dependents and lived in their family home. With regards to education and employment status, most clients (72.2%) reported “complete primary” as their highest level of

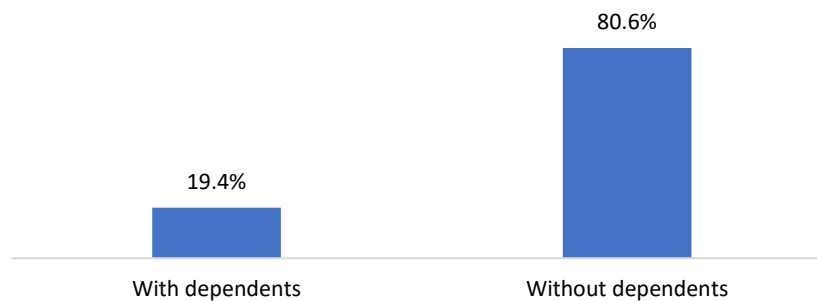
educational attainment to date, and more than half (52.8%) indicated that they were not working due to the fact that they were students.

Figure 79: Relationship Status of Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



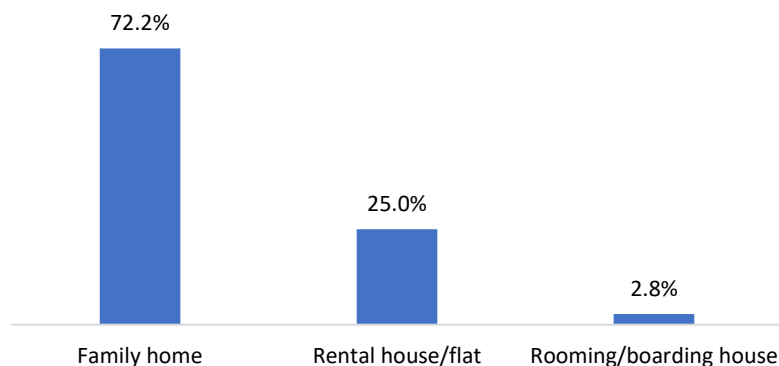
Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 80: Distribution of Drug Treatment Clients with Dependents vs. Those Without Dependents at the NCSA in 2023



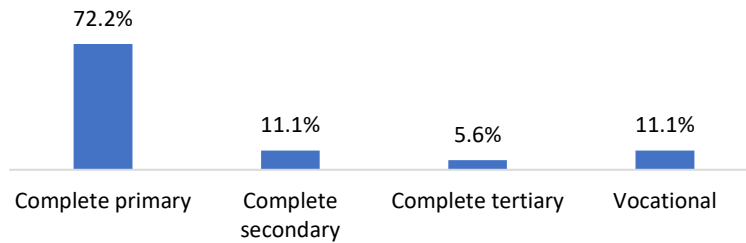
Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 81: Living Arrangements of Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



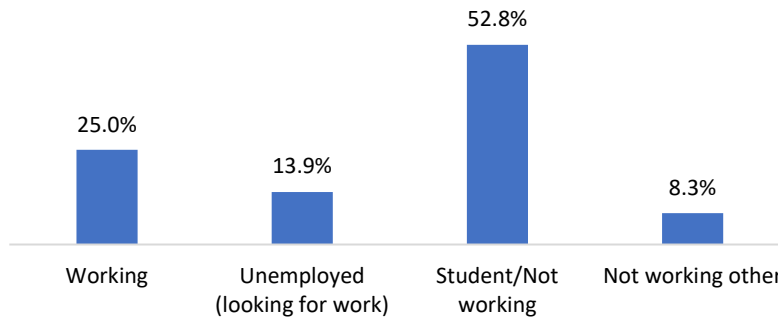
Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 82: Highest Level of Education Attained by Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 83: Employment Status of Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023

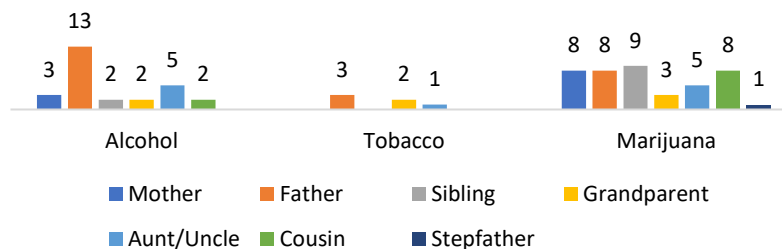


Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Family History of Drug Use

When asked about family history of drug use, clients reported the use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana by relatives, with marijuana being the most common of the three. Reports of drug use were also more common among parents and siblings.

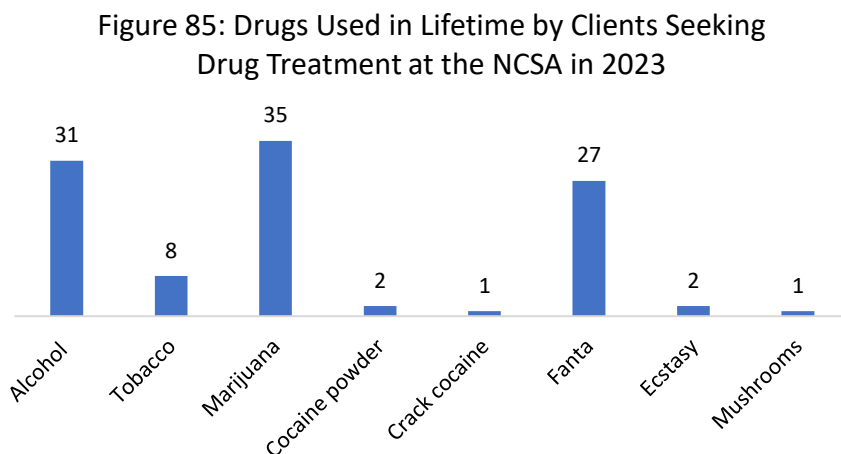
Figure 84: Family History of Drug Use among Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

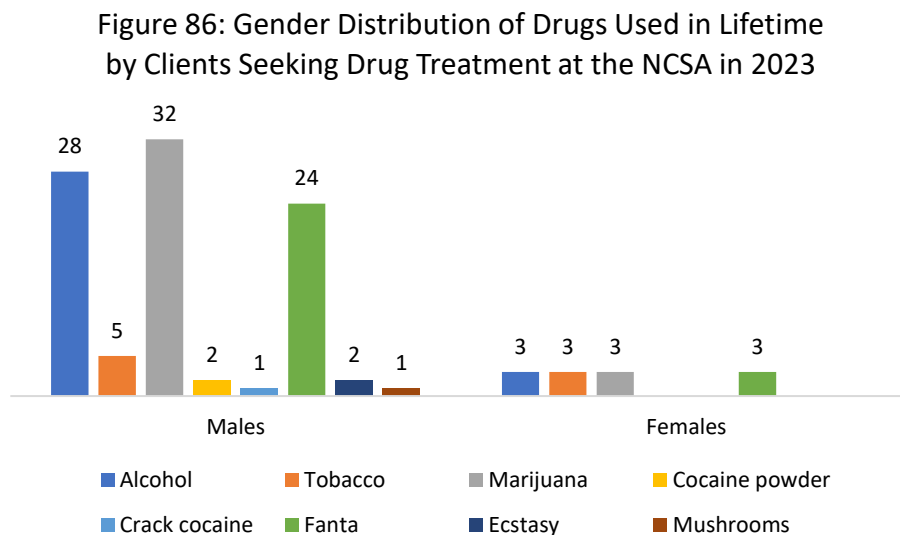
Clients' Drug Use History

When asked about lifetime drug use, clients identified a range of substances, with marijuana, alcohol and fanta being the most popular (See Figure 85). A small number of persons reported lifetime use of tobacco, cocaine powder, crack cocaine, ecstasy and mushrooms (See Figure 85).



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

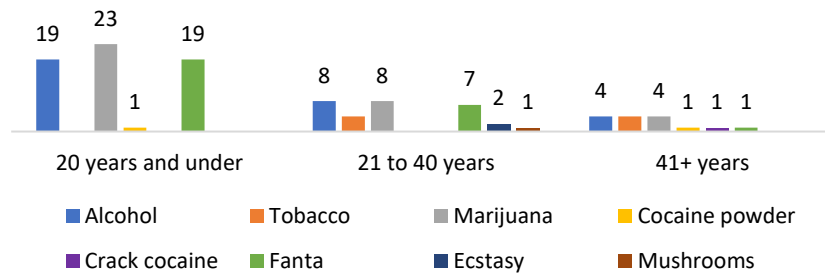
Figure 86 reveals that, both males and females reported the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and fanta. However, only males reported the use of cocaine, ecstasy and mushrooms.



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

With respect to age, while the use of alcohol, marijuana and fanta was reported across all age groups, differences were noted with regards to other substances (See Figure 87). For example, there were no reports of tobacco use among those under 21 years, the use of ecstasy and mushrooms was only reported by those ages 21 to 40, and cocaine use was more common among those 41 and over (See Figure 87).

Figure 87: Age Distribution of Drugs Used in Lifetime
by Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in
2023

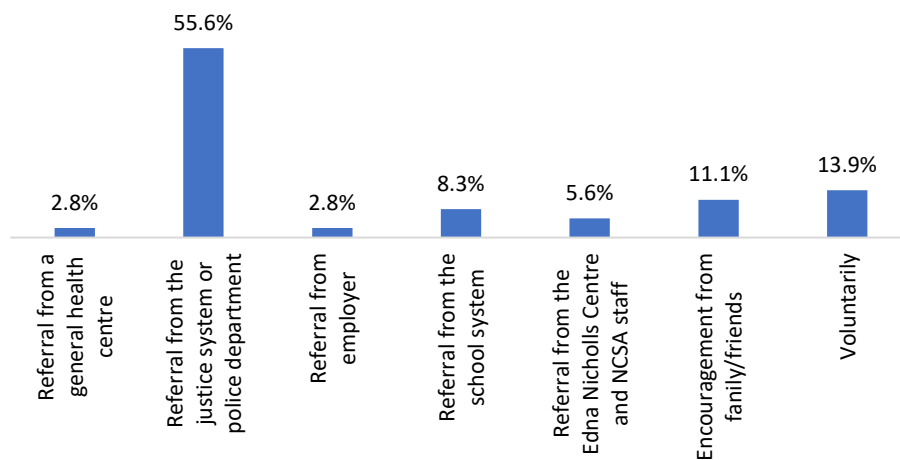


Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Treatment Referral

Figure 88 presents the sources of referral for clients seeking drug treatment at the NCSA in 2023. From the Chart it can be seen that the justice system or police department was the primary referral source during that year. Other persons sought treatment due to encouragement from family and friends as well as through referrals from the school system, the Edna Nicholls Centre, their employer and general health centres (See Figure 88). A small percentage also sought treatment of their own volition i.e. voluntarily (See Figure 88).

Figure 88: Sources of Referral for Clients Seeking Drug
Treatment at the NCSA in 2023

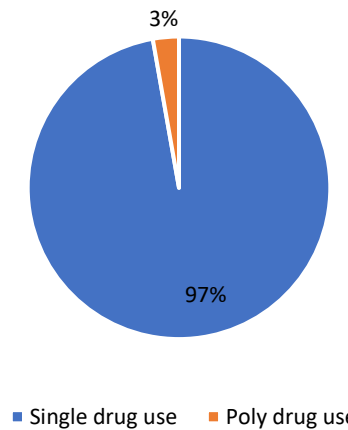


Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Drug Treatment Profile

Almost all of the clients seeking drug treatment at the NCSA in 2023 were treated for single drug use (See Figure 89), with marijuana being the most common drug of choice (See Figure 90). Very few (3%) were treated for their use of multiple substances (See Figure 89).

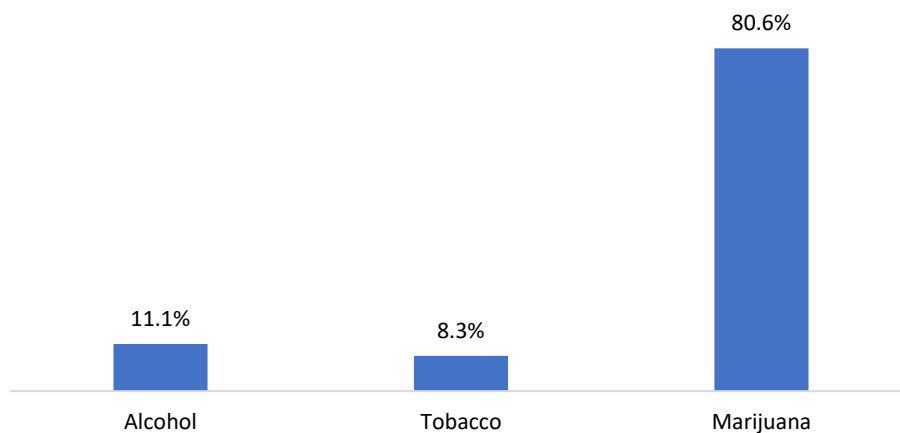
Figure 89: Distribution of Clients Seeking Drug Treatment for Single Drug vs. Poly Drug Use at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

In addition to marijuana, two other primary drugs were identified by clients treated at the NCSA during the period under review: namely, alcohol and tobacco (See Figure 90)

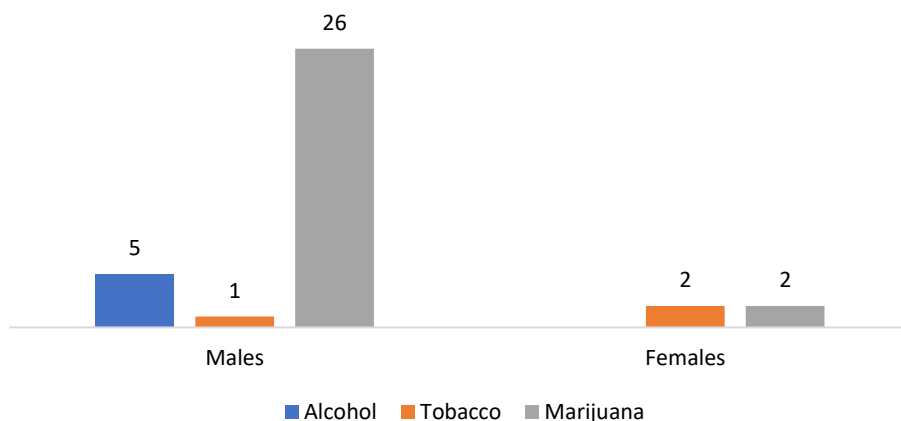
Figure 90: Primary Drugs for which Drug Treatment was Sought at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

When the primary drugs were considered by gender, marijuana was found to be the most popular drug among males, distantly followed by alcohol and tobacco (See Figure 91). Marijuana and tobacco were equally popular among females (See Figure 91). No females were treated for alcohol use (See Figure 91).

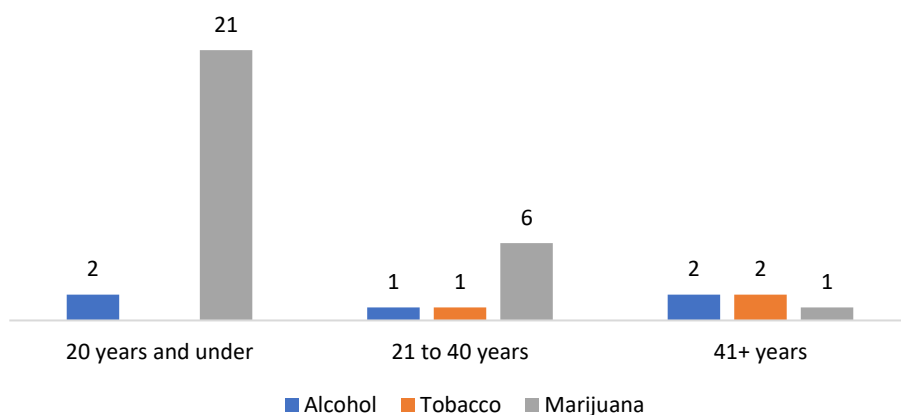
Figure 91: Gender Distribution of the Primary Drugs for which Drug Treatment was sought at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

With regards to age, marijuana was the most popular primary drug among those in the 20 and under and 21 to 40 age groups (See Figure 92). Those ages 41 and over were more likely to seek treatment for their use of alcohol or tobacco (See Figure 92). Figure 92 also shows that while people of all ages sought treatment for alcohol and marijuana, only persons ages 21 and over sought treatment for tobacco.

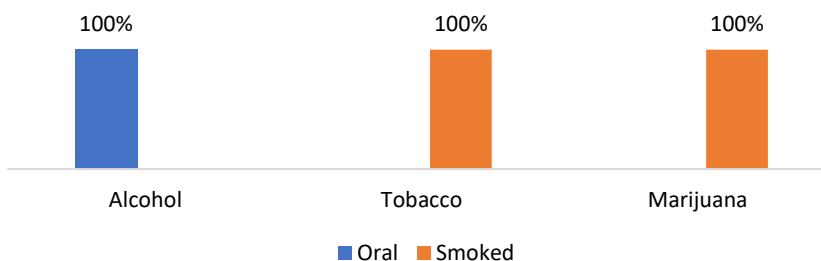
Figure 92: Age Distribution of Primary Drugs for which Drug Treatment was sought at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

When asked about their most frequent method of drug administration, all persons treated for alcohol use reported consuming the substance orally, while ‘smoking’ was the only method of consumption cited for tobacco and marijuana (See Figure 93).

Figure 93: Most Frequent Method of Administration for Primary Drug Among Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



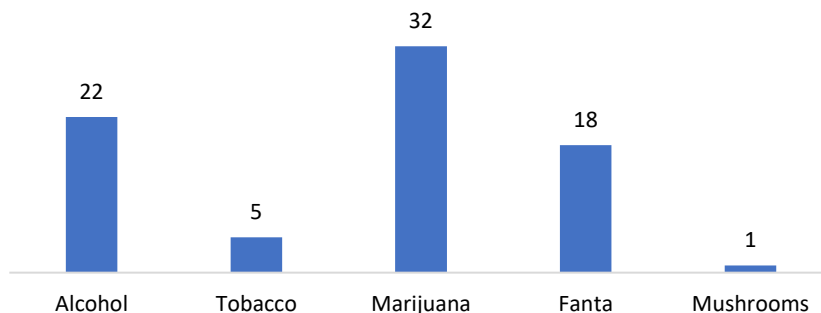
Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Recent Drug Use

Data on drug use by NCSA clients in the year and month leading up to treatment entry is presented in Figures 94 through 99. Marijuana, alcohol and fanta were the top three substances used by clients during both the year and month preceding admission. These three substances were generally the most common among both males and females (See Figures 95 and 98). In addition to the traditional substances, there was also a single case of mushroom use which reportedly occurred during the year preceding treatment. This was reported by a male client (See Figure 95).

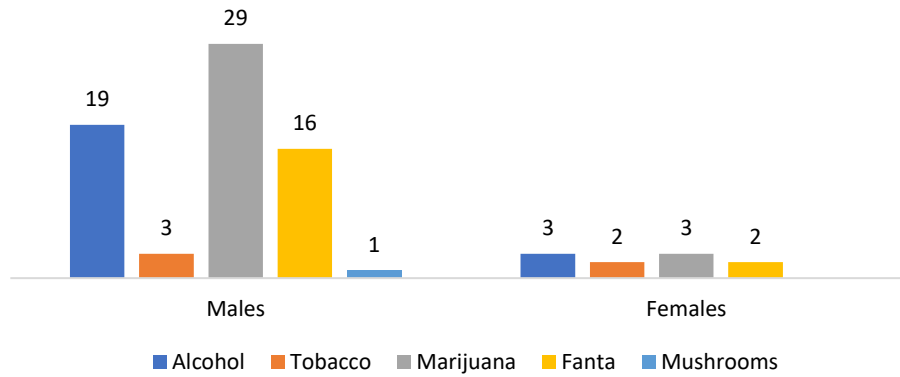
When age was considered, Figures 96 and 99 show that, in order of frequency, marijuana, alcohol and fanta were the top three substances used by those 40 and under prior to treatment entry. For those 41 and over, alcohol use was the most common, followed by tobacco and marijuana use (See Figure 96 and 99).

Figure 94: Drugs Used in the Past 12 Months by Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



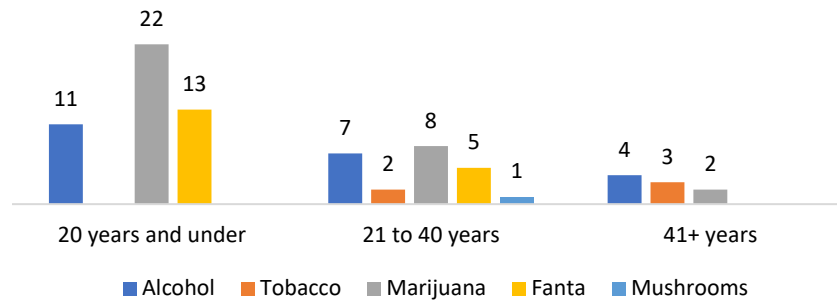
Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 95: Gender Distribution of Drugs Used in the Past 12 Months by Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



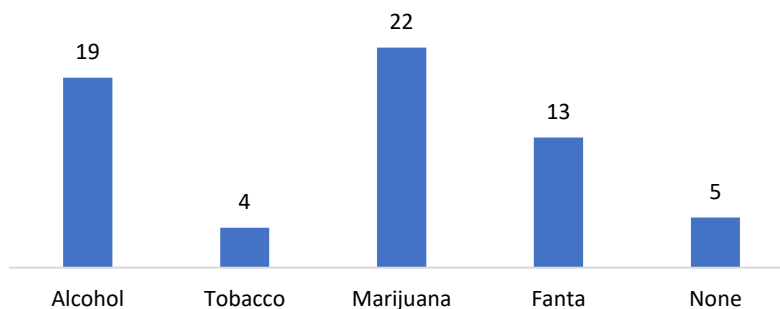
Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 96: Age Distribution of Drugs Used in the Past 12 Months by Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



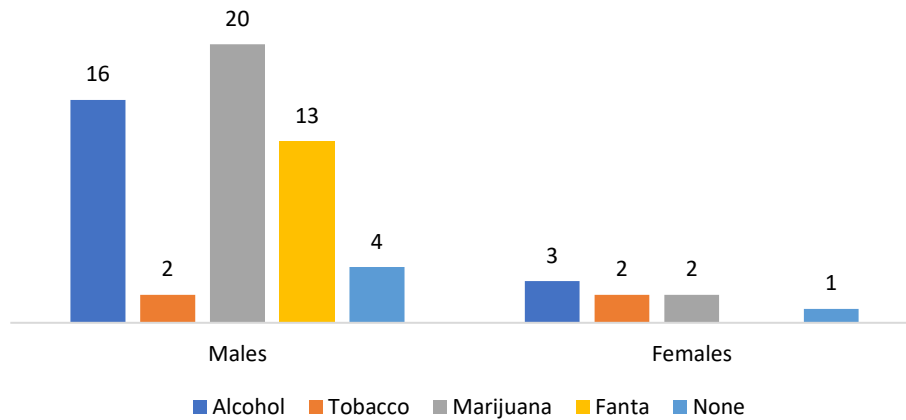
Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 97: Drugs Used in the Past Month by Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023



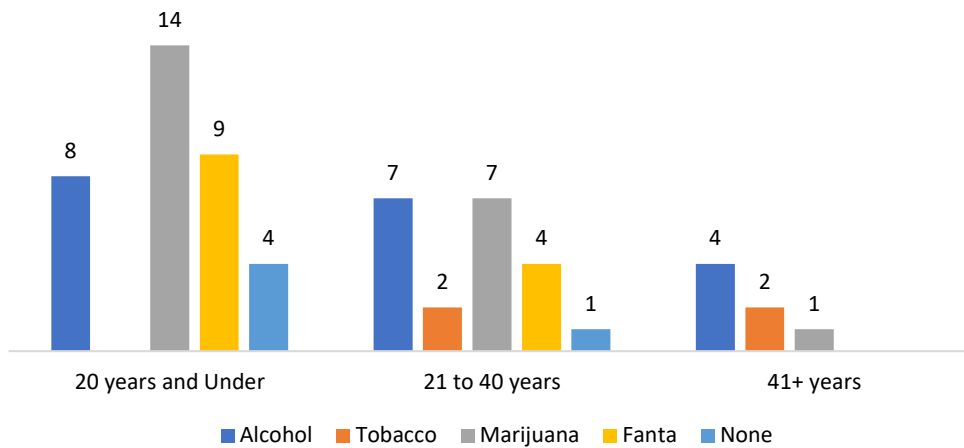
Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 98: Gender Distribution of Drugs Used in the Past 30 Days by Clients Seeking Drug Use at the NCSA in 2023



Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Figure 99: Age Distribution of Drugs Used in the Past 30 Days by Clients Seeking Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023

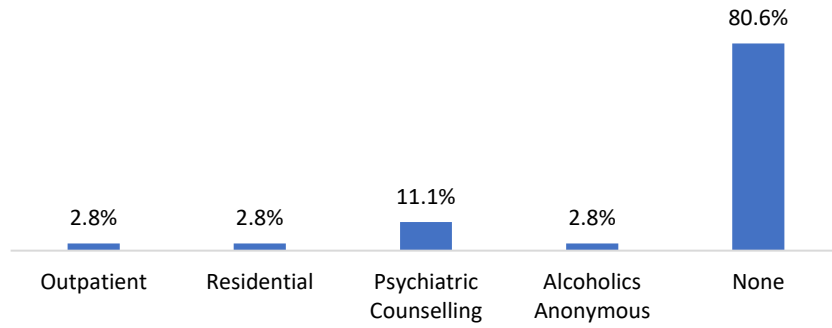


Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

Most Recent Treatment Prior to Admission

Only a small proportion of the clients treated at the NCSA in 2023 reported receiving previous drug treatment, with psychiatric counselling being the most common among those who did (See Figure 100). Very few persons reported receiving outpatient or residential treatment, and an equally small percentage reported attending Alcoholics Anonymous (See Figure 100).

Figure 100: Most Recent Type of Drug Treatment
Prior to Current Enrollment among Clients Seeking
Drug Treatment at the NCSA in 2023

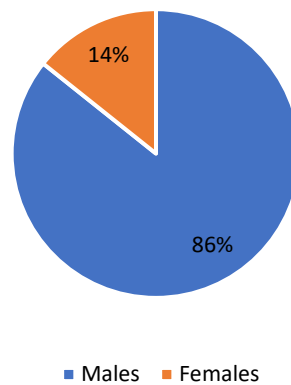


Source: The National Council on Substance Abuse

4.5 Inmate Drug Rehabilitation and Counselling Programme

Forty-two inmates were admitted to the Inmate Drug Rehabilitation and Counselling (IDRC) Programme at Dodds Prison in 2023. Male inmates (86%) seeking treatment far outnumbered their female counterparts (14%) (See Figure 101).

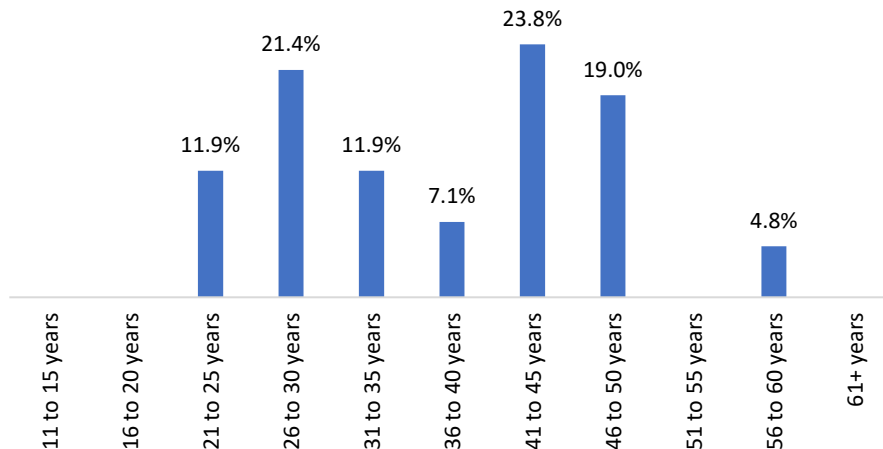
Figure 101: Gender Distribution of Inmates Seeking Drug Treatment from the IDRC Programme in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service/IDRC Programme

The inmates treated within the programme ranged in age from 21 to 60, with the majority (76.1%) of persons being between the ages of 21 and 45 (See Figure 102). When compared their non-institutionalized peers, the IDRC clients were slightly older, with a notable proportion being over the age of 40 (47.6%).

Figure 102: Age Distribution of Inmates Seeking Drug Treatment from the IDRC Programme in 2023

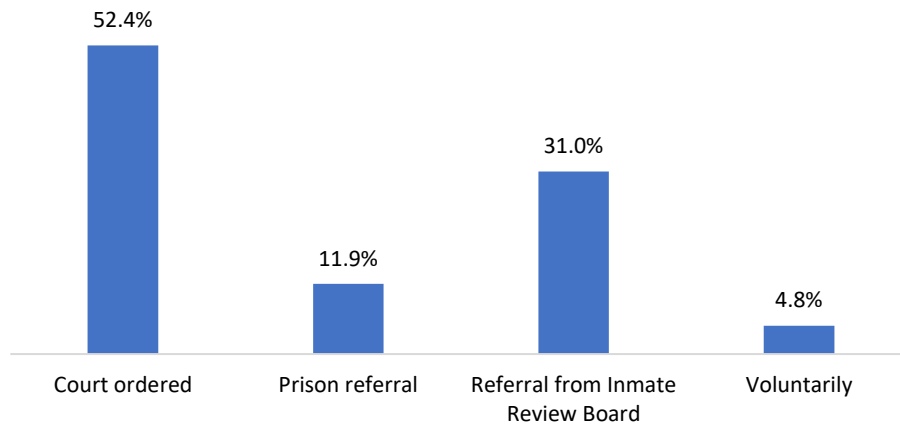


Source: The Barbados Prison Service/IDRC Programme

Treatment Referral

The majority of 2023 IDRC clients were either court ordered to attend treatment or were referred by the Inmate Review Board. A comparably smaller percentage were referred by the prison or sought treatment voluntarily (self-referred) (See Figure 103).

Figure 103: Sources of Referral for Inmates Seeking Treatment from the IDRC Programme in 2023

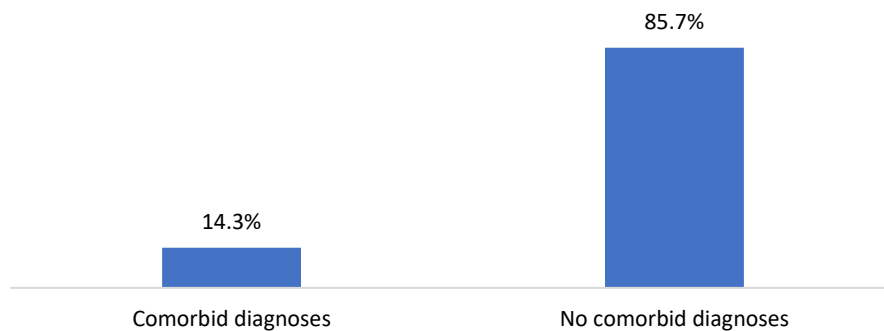


Source: The Barbados Prison Service/IDRC Programme

Psychiatric History

Of the 42 persons treated within the IDRC programme in 2023, 6 (14.3%) reported having a co-morbid mental health and substance use disorder (See Figure 104).

Figure 104: Distribution of Inmates with Comorbid Diagnoses vs. those without Comorbid Diagnoses who Sought Treatment from the IDRC Programme in 2023

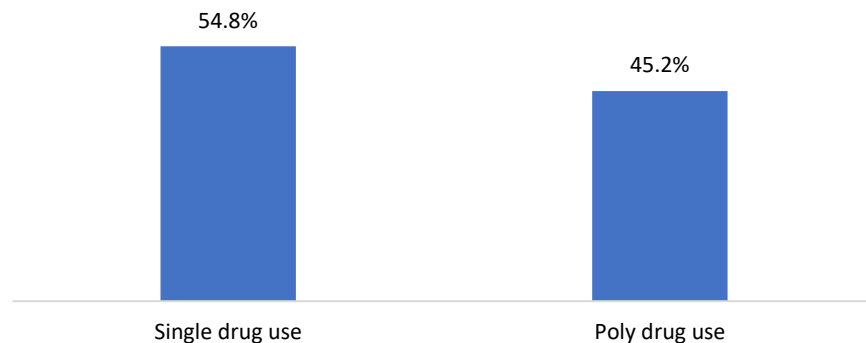


Source: The Barbados Prison Service/IDRC Programme

Drug Treatment Profile

Figure 105 shows that the percentage of clients treated for single drug use (54.8%) slightly outnumbered the percentage treated for poly drug use (45.2%).

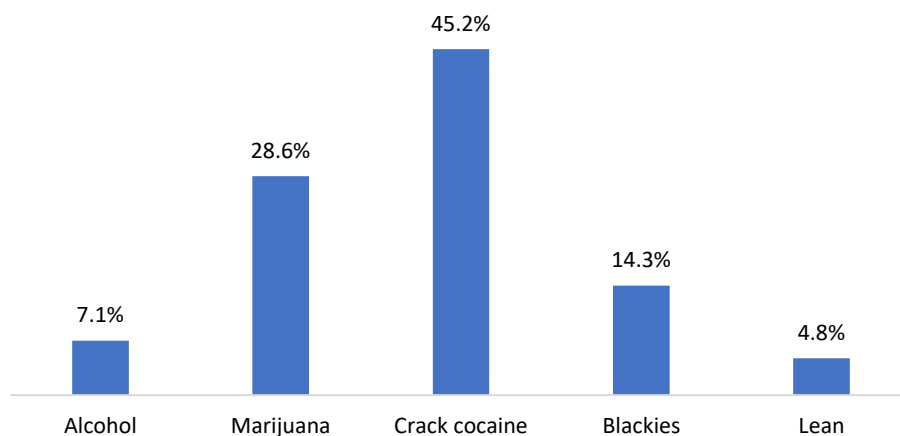
Figure 105: Distribution of Inmates Seeking Treatment for Single Drug vs. Poly Drug Use from the IDRC Programme in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service/IDRC Programme

Crack cocaine was the most common primary drug motivating the need for treatment among the IDRC clients in 2023 (See Figure 106). This was followed by marijuana, blackies, alcohol and lean (See Figure 106).

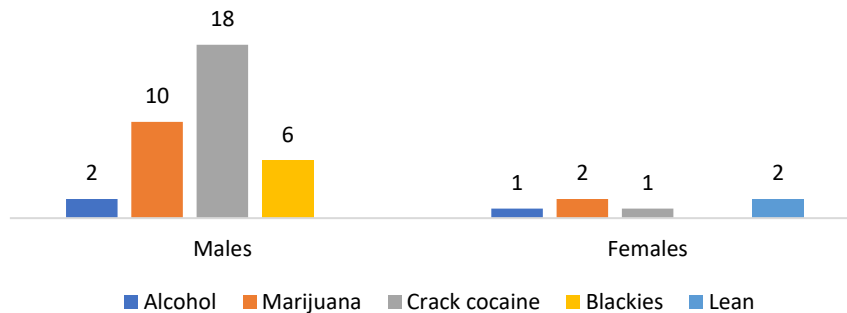
Figure 106: Primary Drugs for which Inmates Sought Treatment from the IDRC Programme in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service/IDRC Programme

When gender was considered, Figure 107 reveals that crack cocaine, marijuana and blackies remained the top three primary drugs for males, while marijuana and lean were most common substances among females. Also of note is the fact that only females were treated for lean (See Figure 107).

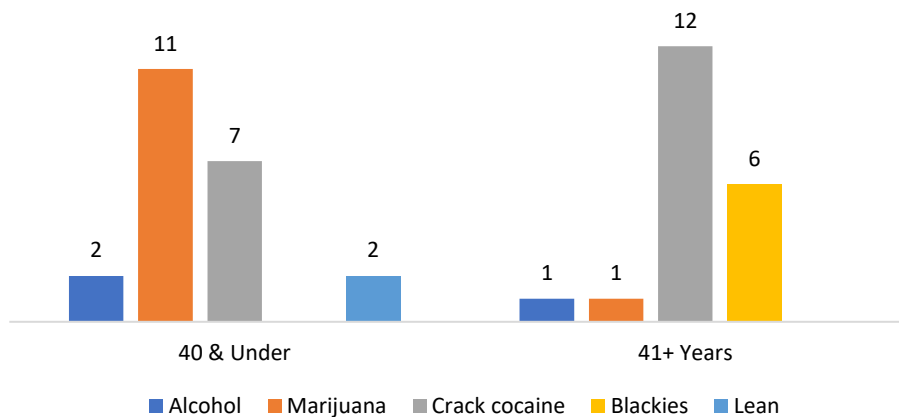
Figure 107: Primary Drugs for which Inmates Sought Drug Treatment from the IDRC Programme in 2023 by Gender



Source: The Barbados Prison Service/IDRC Programme

With regards to age, marijuana was the most common primary drug for those 40 and under while crack cocaine was most problematic for those 41 and over (See Figure 108). In addition to marijuana, inmates who were 40 and under also sought treatment for crack cocaine, alcohol and lean (See Figure 108). For those 41 and over, lean was the second most common primary drug (See Figure 108). Alcohol and marijuana were notably less popular (See Figure 108).

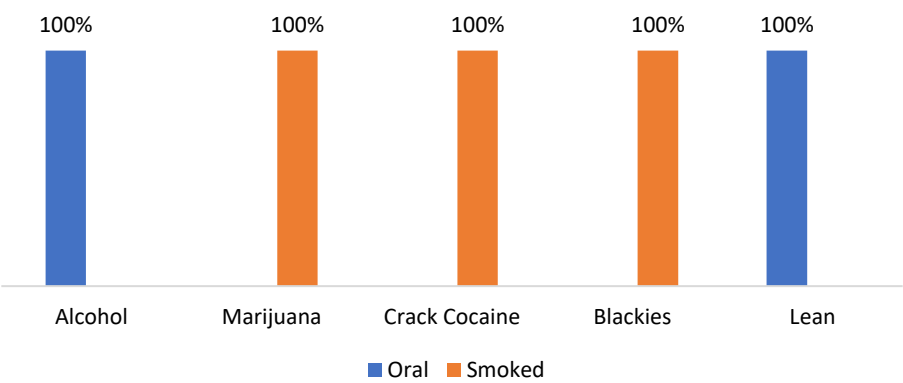
Figure 108: Primary Drugs for which Inmates Sought Drug Treatment from the IDRC Programme in 2023 by Age



Source: The Barbados Prison Service/IDRC Programme

The methods of primary drug administration reported by inmates are presented in Figure 109. All inmates who cited alcohol or lean as their primary drug of choice consumed the substances orally, while smoking was the only method reported for marijuana, crack cocaine and blackies (See Figure 109).

Figure 109: Most Common Method of Administration for Primary Drug Among Inmates Seeking Treatment from the IDRC Programme in 2023



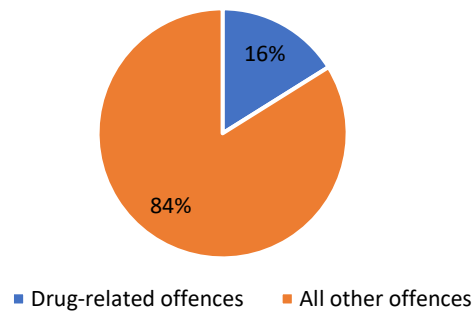
Source: The Barbados Prison Service/IDRC Programme

5. Supply Control

5.1 Barbados Police Service

Of the 6228 criminal offences recorded by the Barbados Police Service in 2023, 16% were drug-related (See Figure 110).

Figure 110: Distribution of Drug Offences vs. All Other Offences Recorded by the Barbados Police Service

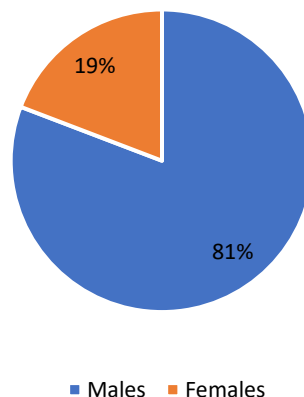


Source: The Barbados Police Service

Demographic Profile of Drug Offenders

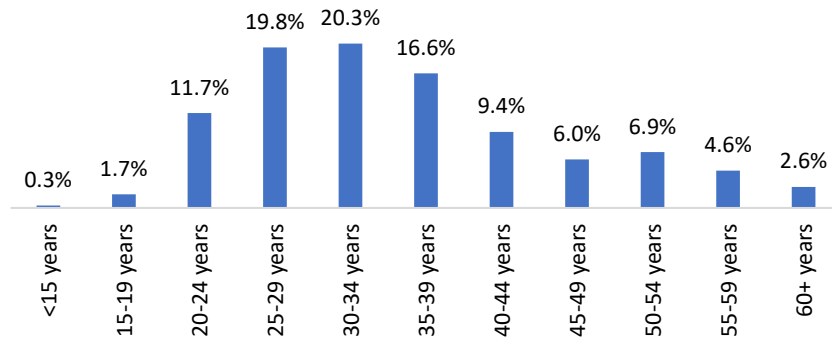
Three hundred and forty-nine persons were charged with drug offences in 2023, with males and persons under the age of 40 accounting for the vast majority (See Figures 111 through 113).

Figure 111: Gender Distribution of Persons Charged with Drug Offences during 2023



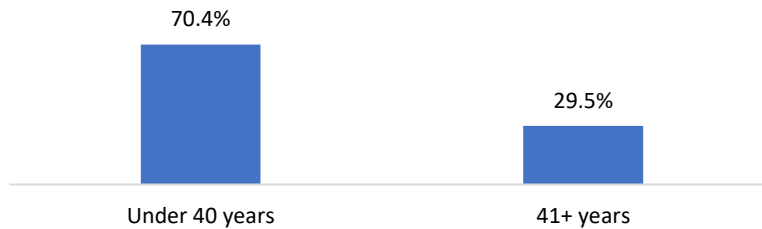
Source: The Barbados Police Service

Figure 112: Age Distribution of Persons Charged with Drug Offences in 2023



Source: The Barbados Police Service

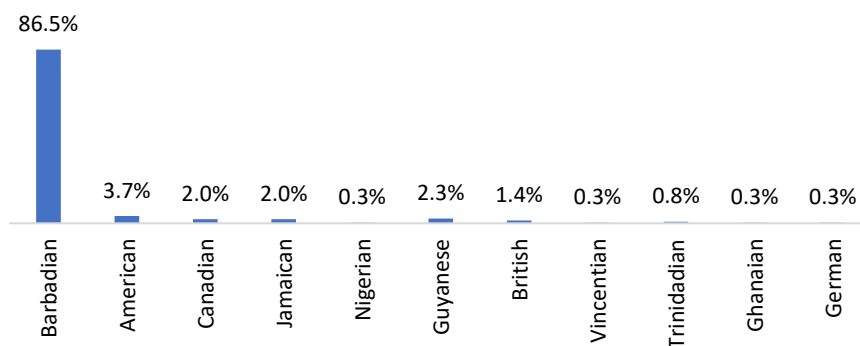
Figure 113: Age Distribution of Persons Charged with Drug Offences in 2023 - Under 40 vs. 41 and Over years



Source: The Barbados Police Service

While some drug-offenders were non-nationals, most (86.5%) were Barbadian (See Figure 114). Among those who were non-nationals were persons from: the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Nigeria, Ghana, Jamaica, Guyana, St. Vincent and Trinidad (See Figure 114).

Figure 114: Distribution of Persons Charged with Drug Offences in 2023 by Nationality

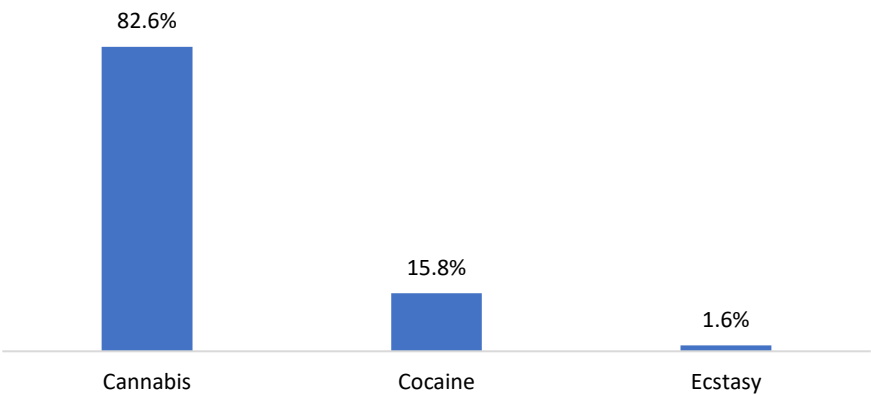


Source: The Barbados Police Service

Distribution of Offences by Drug Type

As in previous years, cannabis offences accounted for the lion’s share of all drug offences on record for the period under review (See Figure 115). This was distantly followed by cocaine and ecstasy offences (See Figure 115).

Figure 115: Distribution of Drug Offences Recorded by the Barbados Police Service in 2023 by Drug Type

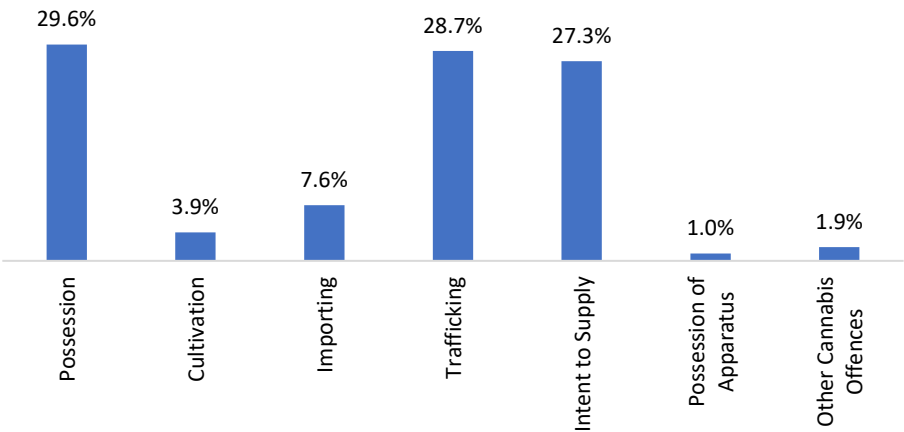


Source: The Barbados Police Service

Cannabis Offences

Figure 116 reveals that Possession, Trafficking and Intent to Supply were the most common cannabis offences during the year. Comparably fewer persons were charged with Importing, Cultivation, Possession of Apparatus or Other Cannabis Offences (See Figure 116).

Figure 116: Distribution of Cannabis Offences Recorded in 2023 by Offence Type

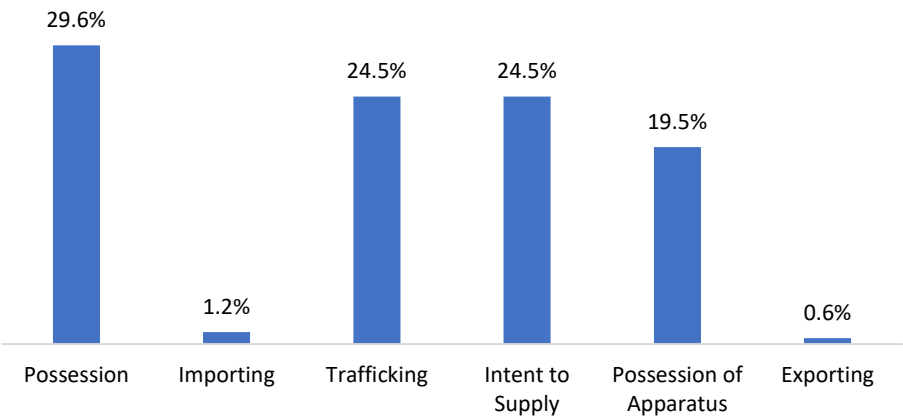


Source: The Barbados Police Service

Cocaine Offences

Similarly, Possession, Trafficking and Intent to Supply were also the most common cocaine offences recorded in 2023 (See Figure 117). These were closely followed by Possession of Apparatus. Very few persons were charged with Importing or Exporting the substance (See Figure 117).

Figure 117: Distribution of Cocaine Offences Recorded in 2023 by Offence Type

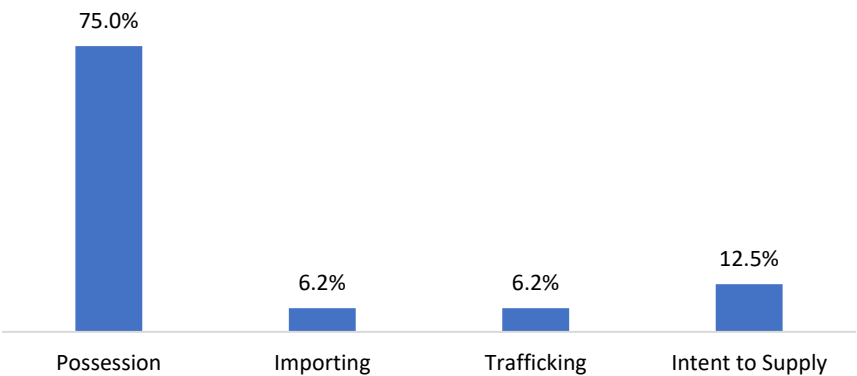


Source: The Barbados Police Service

Ecstasy Offences

When compared to cannabis and cocaine, there were fewer ecstasy-related charges meted out during the year, with Possession far outranking all others (See Figure 117). The remaining offences included Intent to Supply, Importation and Trafficking (See Figure 117).

Figure 117: Distribution of Ecstasy Offences Recorded in 2023 by Offence Type



Source: The Barbados Police Service

Drug Seizures

With regards to drug seizures, cannabis remained the most commonly seized drug in 2023, and was seized in compressed, plant and loose forms (See Table 3). In addition to cannabis, Police also seized cocaine and methamphetamine/ecstasy during the year (See Table 3).

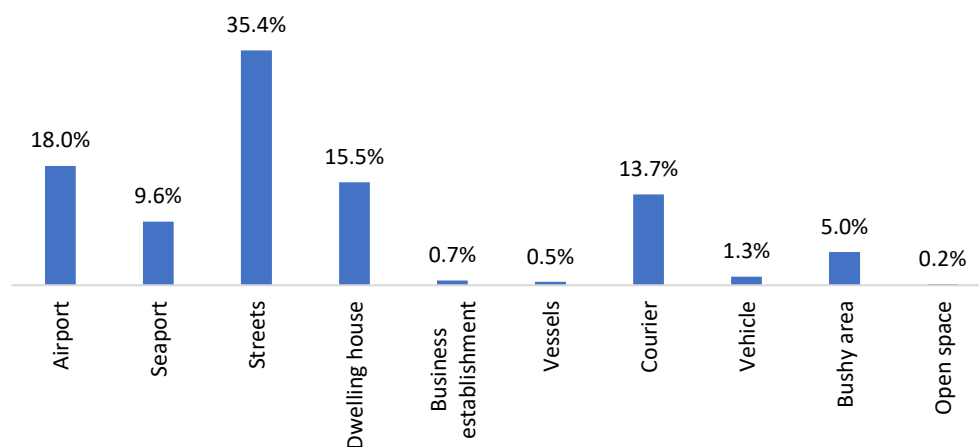
Table 3: Drug Seizures Recorded by the Barbados Police Service in 2023

Drug/Substance	Number of Seizures	Quantity Seized
Compressed cannabis	286	10,930.68 kg
Cannabis plants	48	13,021 plants
Loose cannabis	175	899.92 kg
Cocaine	41	1067.60 kg
Methamphetamine/Ecstasy	4	3342 tablets

Source: The Barbados Police Service

Drug seizures took place in various settings, with the streets, the airport, dwelling houses, couriers and the seaport being most common (See Figure 118).

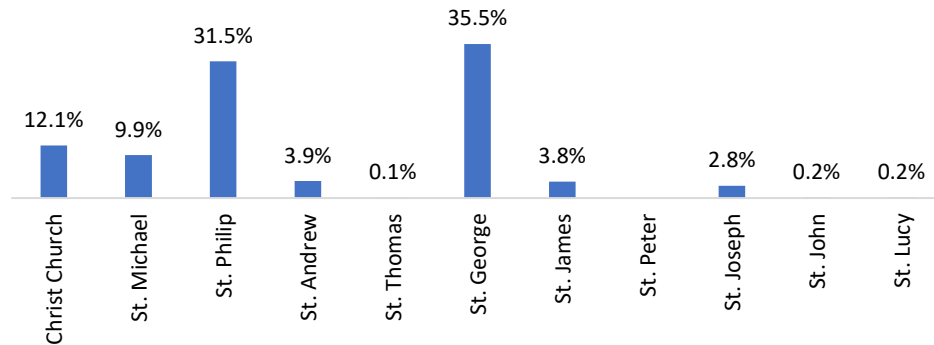
Figure 118: Distribution of 2023 Drug Seizures by Seizure Location



Source: The Barbados Police Service

The distribution of cannabis plants seized by parish is presented in Figure 119. From the Chart it can be seen that, during 2023, most seizures of the plant took place in St. George and St. Philip.

Figure 119: Distribution of Cannabis Plants Discovered and Destroyed in 2023 by Parish of Discovery



Source: The Barbados Police Service

Street Values of Drugs

Table 4 presents the estimated street values of various drugs for the 2023 calendar year. These estimates are based on intelligence reports and suggest that cannabis was sold for between \$5.00 and \$10.00 per gram depending on the source market, while cocaine retailed for \$50.00 per gram (See Table 4). The selling price for both ecstasy and methamphetamine were reported by pill. Ecstasy was estimated to be valued at approximately \$20.00 to \$50.00 per pill, while methamphetamine sold for between \$50.00 and \$100.00 per pill (See Table 4).

Table 4: Street Values of Drugs Recorded by the Barbados Police Service for the Year 2023

Drug	Estimated Street Value
Cannabis	\$5.00 per gram (cannabis from St. Vincent) \$10.00 per gram (cannabis from Jamaica, Canada, USA)
Cocaine	\$50.00 per gram
Ecstasy	\$20.00 - \$50.00 per pill
Methamphetamine	\$50.00 - \$100.00 per pill

Source: The Barbados Police Service

Deportation Statistics

Of the thirty-nine criminal deportees returned to Barbados in 2023, 2 were deported due to drug-related matters. Both individuals were females, under the age of 40. One was in the 25 to 29 age category while the other was in the 30 to 34 age group. Both individuals were deported by countries outside the region, namely Canada and England.

Firearm and Ammunition Seizures

Table 5 presents the firearm and ammunition seizures recorded by the Barbados Police Service in 2023. The distribution of seizures is similar to that of previous years, with cartridges and projectiles being the most numerous. In addition to the cartridges and projectiles, 84 firearms were also seized.

Table 5: Firearm and Ammunition Seizures Recorded by the Barbados Police Service in 2023

Item seized	Quantity seized
Firearms	84
Cartridges	1655
Projectiles	150

Source: The Barbados Police Service

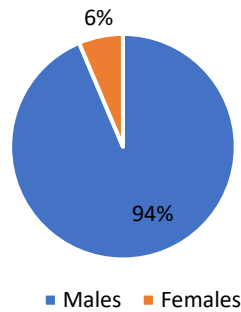
Money Laundering Offences

Nine money laundering offences were recorded in 2023, 2 (22.2%) of which were drug-related.

5.2 Barbados Prison Service

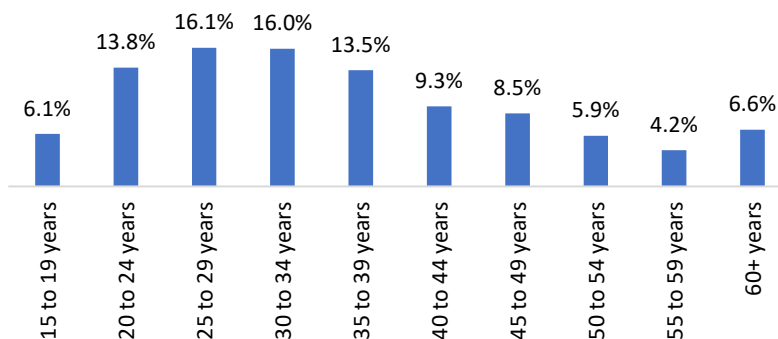
Seven hundred and thirty-nine persons were admitted to Dodds Prison during 2023, with males and persons under the age of 40 representing the majority of admissions (See Figures 120 through 122).

Figure 120: Gender Distribution of Inmates Admitted to Dodds Prison in 2023



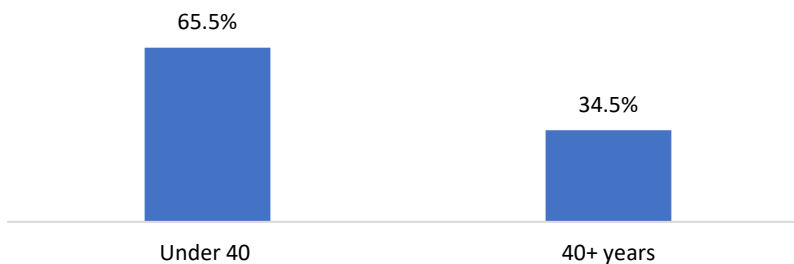
Source: The Barbados Prison Service

Figure 121: Age Distribution of Inmates Admitted to Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

Figure 122: Age Distribution of Inmates Admitted to Dodds Prison in 2023: Under 40 vs. 40 and Over

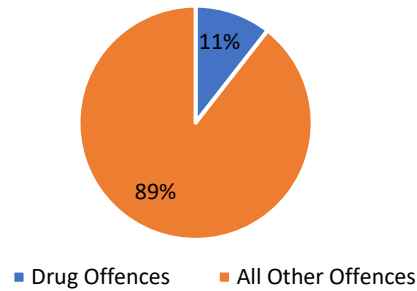


Source: The Barbados Prison Service

Drug-related Incarcerations

Figure 123 reveals that 11% of the admissions to Dodds Prison in 2023 were drug-related.

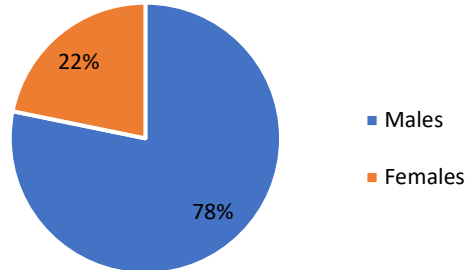
Figure 123: Distribution of Inmates Admitted to Dodds Prison in 2023: Drug Offences vs. All Other Offences



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

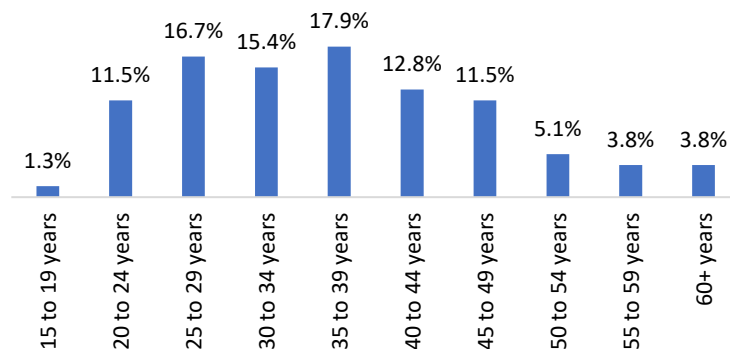
Most persons incarcerated for drug offences were either male and/or below the age of 40 (See Figures 124 through 126).

Figure 124: Gender Distribution of Inmates Admitted to Dodds Prison for Drug Offences in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

Figure 125: Age Distribution of Inmates Admitted to Dodds Prison for Drug Offences in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

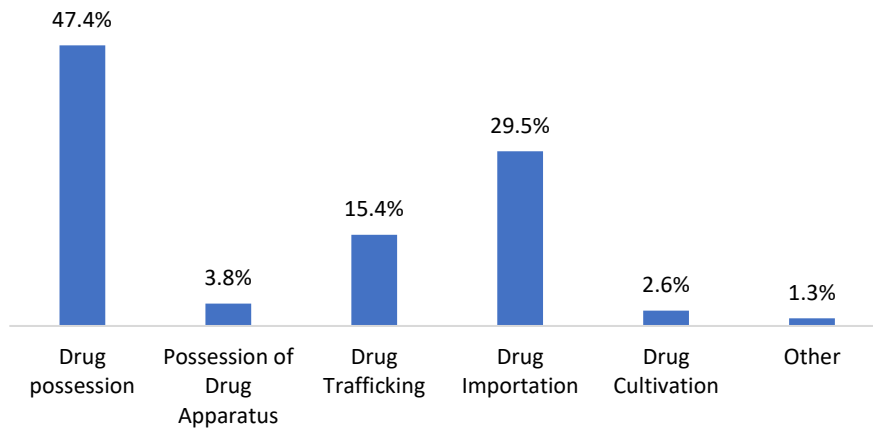
Figure 126: Age Distribution of Persons Admitted to Dodds Prison for Drug Offences in 2023: Under 40 vs. 40 and Over



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

The drug offences for which persons were incarcerated are presented in Figure 127. Drug Possession, Drug Importation and Drug Trafficking were the top three offences, distantly followed by Possession of Drug Apparatus and Drug Cultivation (See Figure 27). There was also a small percentage of unspecified drug offences (Other – 1.3%) (See Figure 127).

Figure 127: Distribution of Drug Offences for which Inmates were Incarcerated at Dodds Prison in 2023

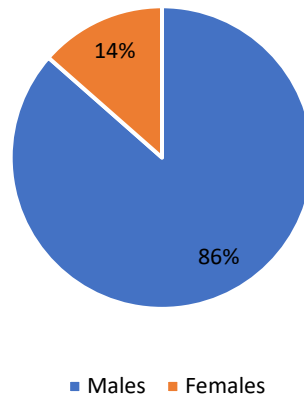


Source: The Barbados Prison Service

Drug-related Offences by Age and Gender

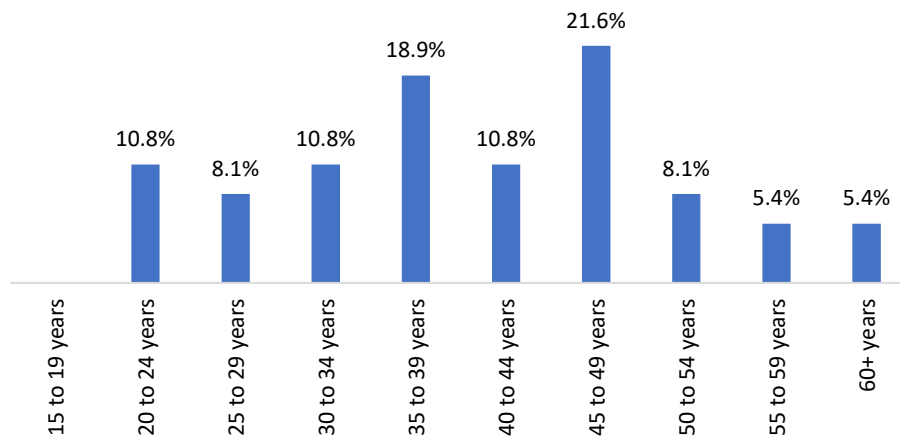
Males and persons between the ages of 20 and 50 accounted for the majority of inmates incarcerated for Drug Possession (See Figures 128 and 129). Also noteworthy is the fact that just over half (51.3%) of those jailed for Drug Possession were between 35 and 50 years of age (See Figure 129).

Figure 128: Gender Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Drug Possession at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

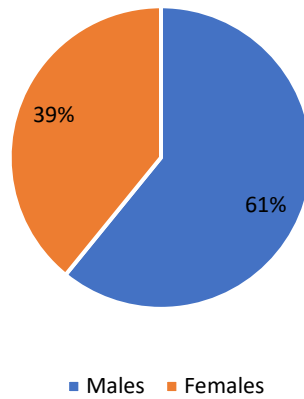
Figure 129: Age Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Drug Possession at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

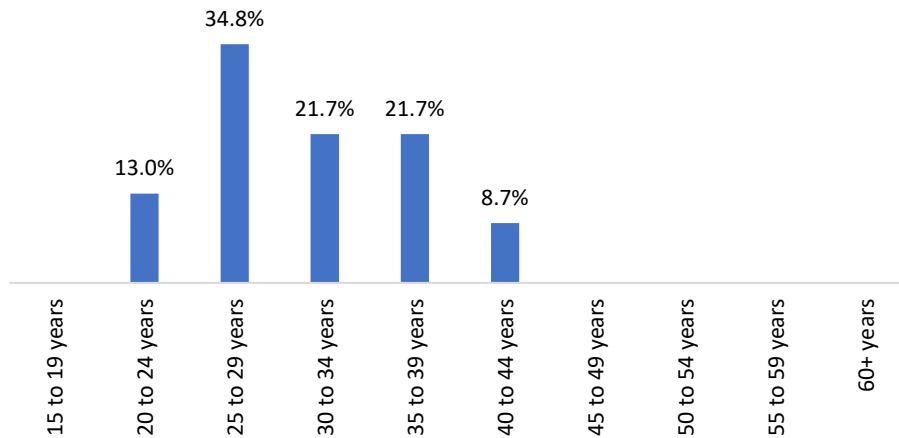
Figure 130 shows that males outnumbered females incarcerated for Drug Importation. With regards to age, those incarcerated for Drug Importation tended to be younger when compared to other offences. In fact, all persons were age 44 or under, with more than three quarters (78.2%) being between 25 and 39 years (See Figure 131).

Figure 130: Gender Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Drug Importation at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

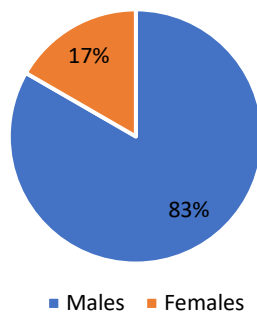
Figure 131: Age Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Drug Importation at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

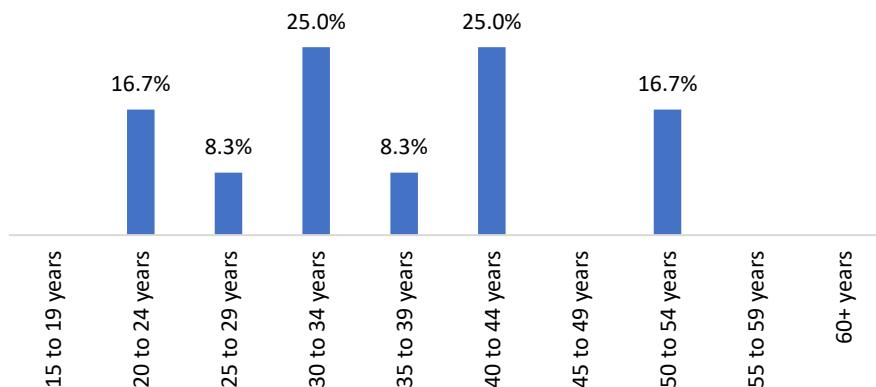
The profile of persons incarcerated for Drug Trafficking was somewhat similar to that for Drug Importation, whereby the inmates were most likely to be male and 44 years of age or younger (See Figures 132 and 133). Nevertheless, it should be noted that there was a small percentage in the 50 to 54 age category (See Figure 133).

Figure 132: Gender Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Drug Trafficking at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

Figure 133: Age Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Drug Trafficking at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

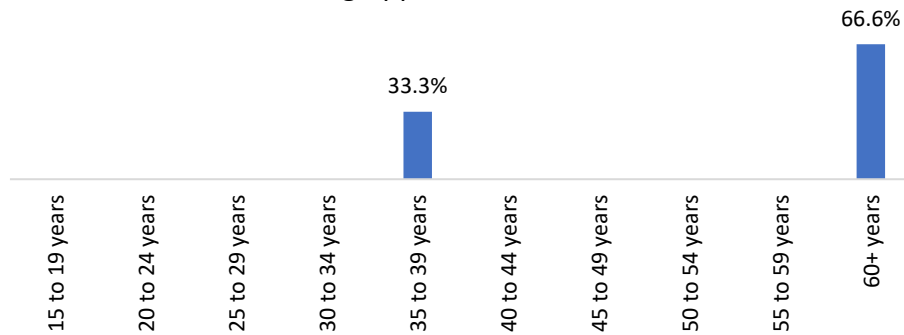
Only males were incarcerated for the Possession of Drug Apparatus in 2023 (See Figure 134). And when age was considered, Figure 135 shows that two thirds were age 60 and above while the remainder were in the 35 to 39 age category.

Figure 134: Gender Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Possession of Drug Apparatus at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

Figure 135: Age Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Possession of Drug Apparatus at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

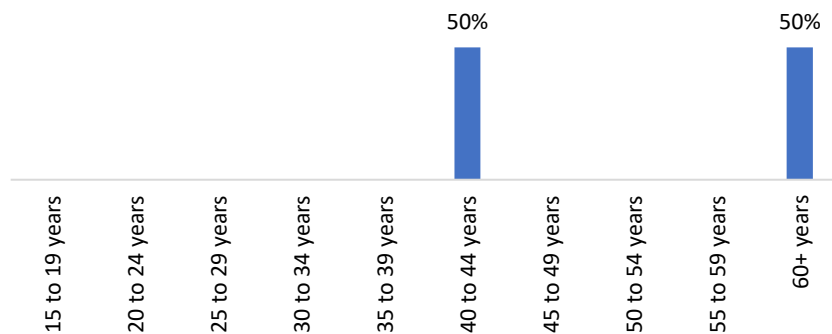
As with the Possession of Drug Apparatus, only males were incarcerated for Drug Cultivation at Dodds Prison in 2023 (See Figure 136). With regards to age, the inmates were equally split between the 40 to 44 and 60 and over age groups (See Figure 137).

Figure 136: Gender Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Drug Cultivation at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

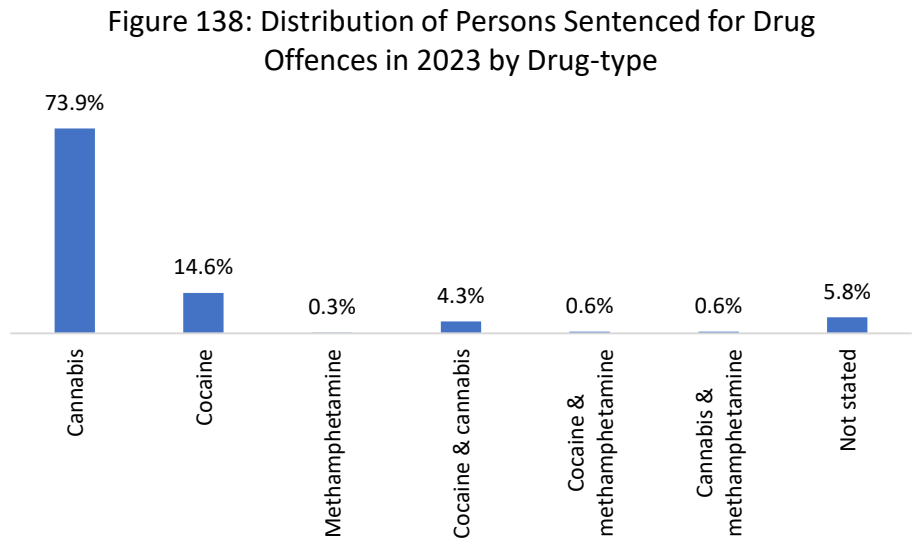
Figure 137: Age Distribution of Inmates Incarcerated for Drug Cultivation at Dodds Prison in 2023



Source: The Barbados Prison Service

5.3 Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit

The Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit reported that 329⁹ persons were tried for drug-related offences in the law courts of Barbados during 2023. The distribution of persons tried is presented by drug type in Figure 138. As in previous years, most persons were tried for cannabis-related offences, either alone or in combination with other substances e.g. cocaine and methamphetamine (See Figure 138).



Source: The Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit

Offence Outcomes

Cannabis

Possession, Trafficking and Intent to Supply were the top three cannabis offences tried during the year (See Table 6). In each instance, the most common sentence outcomes were: Reprimanded and Discharged (R&D), Convicted, Reprimanded and Discharged (CRD), or dismissed/withdrawn case (See Table 6).

⁹ This includes persons tried at both the Magistrate and Supreme Court levels. However, it should be noted that the total excludes data from the St. Matthias Magistrate Court. Data from this Court was not accessible due to the Court being relocated as a result of environmental issues. Also noteworthy is the fact that the number of persons accused/tried is lower than the number of drug offences on record as there are often multiple charges associated with a single case.

Table 6: Sentence Outcomes for Cannabis Offences in 2023 by Offence Type

OFFENCE	SENTENCE OUTCOME															TOTAL
	Fine	Imprisonment	CRD	R&D	Community Service	Community Service & R&D	Probation, & Counselling, & Comm. Service	Bond	Dismissed/ Withdrawn	Probation, Bond, & Comm. Service & Enrollment	Probation & Counselling	Suspended Sentence	Time Served	Counselling	Unknown	
Possession	16	5	50	123	3	4		9	39				6		1	256
Possession within radius of a school				1												1
Importation	24	2	5	7				3	2			1				44
Trafficking	29	3	50	68	2	4	2	16	29			4	3	1	1	212
Conspire to Traffic								4								4
Intent to Supply	5		55	106		4		5	29				1		1	206
Cultivation	5	1	5	8		3		4	7	1	1	3	4			42
Possession of Apparatus		1	1	7				1	2			1				13
Acts Preparatory to Importation	1															1
TOTAL	80	12	166	320	5	15	2	42	108	1	1	9	14	1	3	779

Source: The Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit

Cocaine

When compared to cannabis offences, notably fewer types of cocaine offences were adjudicated during the year (See Tables 6 and 7). Like cannabis, Possession was the most common offence, followed by Intent to Supply, Possession of Apparatus and Trafficking (See Table 7). Only a small number of persons were tried for Importation (See Table 7). R&D was the single most common sentence outcome for cases involving Possession, Intent to Supply and Trafficking (See Table 7). For cases where persons were tried for Possession of Apparatus, most individuals received a CRD (See Table 7).

Table 7: Sentence Outcomes for Cocaine Offences in 2023 by Offence Type

OFFENCE	SENTENCE OUTCOME									
	Fine	Imprisonment	CRD	R&D	Bond	Suspended Sentence	Time Served	Dismissed/Withdrawn	Not Guilty	TOTAL
Possession	2	6	5	20	1			5	1	40
Importation	2	1					1	1	1	6
Trafficking	2	2	4	11	4	1		4	1	29
Intent to Supply			6	19				5	1	31
Possession of Apparatus		4	11	8	2	3		2		30
TOTAL	6	13	26	58	7	4	1	17	4	136

Source: The Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit

Methamphetamine

Eight methamphetamine charges were tried in 2023. Like the other substances, Possession was the most common, accounting for six of the eight charges (See Table 8). CRD was the most common sentence outcome for the Possession cases (See Table 8). There was one charge each for Trafficking and Intent to Supply (See Table 8). The Intent to Supply charge received a CRD while the Trafficking case resulted in imprisonment (See Table 8).

Table 8: Sentence Outcomes for Methamphetamine Offences in 2023 by Offence Type

OFFENCE	SENTENCE OUTCOME				
	Fine	CRD	R&D	Imprisonment	TOTAL
Possession	1	4	1		6
Trafficking				1	1
Intent to Supply		1			1
TOTAL	1	5	1	1	8

Source: The Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit

Controlled Substances (Not Stated)

There were 53 cases involving unidentified controlled substances (See Table 9). For this category of offences, Possession remained the most common, followed by Importation and Trafficking (See Table 9). Imprisonment was the most common sentence outcome for Possession and Trafficking while the Importation cases were equally likely to result in the individual being imprisoned, having their case dismissed or being released for time served (See Table 9). There were two cases involving the Cultivation of an unidentified controlled substance. One individual was fined, and the other was deported (See Table 9).

Table 9: Sentence Outcomes for Controlled Substance (Not Stated) Offences in 2023 by Offence Type

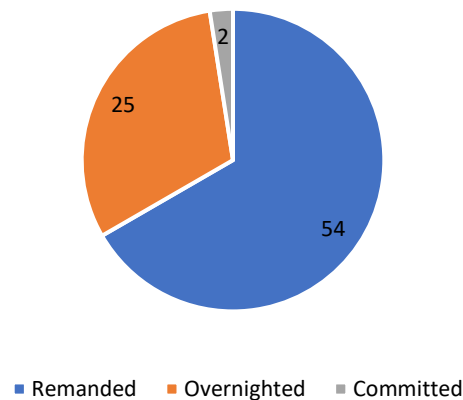
OFFENCE	SENTENCE OUTCOME							
	Imprisonment	CRD	R&D	Dismissed	Fine	Deportation	Time Served	TOTAL
Possession of a Controlled Drug: Not Stated	6	3	2	3	4	1	3	22
Trafficking of a Controlled Drug: Not Stated	8			3			3	14
Importation of a Controlled Drug: Not Stated	3	2	2	3	2		3	15
Cultivation of a Controlled Drug: Not Stated					1	1		2
TOTAL	17	5	4	9	7	2	9	53

Source: The Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit

5.4 Government Industrial School

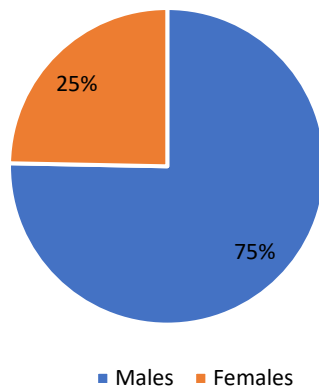
Eighty-one wards were admitted to the Government Industrial School (GIS) in 2023. Of this number, two were committed to the institution, 25 'overnighted'¹⁰ and 54 were remanded (See Figure 139). Males accounted for three quarters of the wards admitted in 2023, while approximately 80% were between the ages of 14 and 15 years (See Figures 140 and 141).

Figure 139: Distribution of Sentence/Stay Types for Wards Admitted to the Government Industrial School in 2023



Source: The Government Industrial School

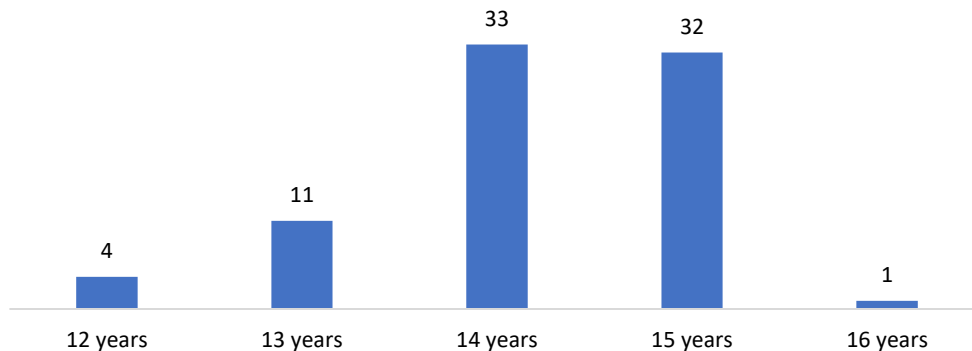
Figure 140: Gender Distribution of Wards Remanded/Committed to the Government Industrial School in 2023



Source: The Government Industrial School

¹⁰ On occasion, youth who come into contact with the law will overnight at the GIS while they assist police with their investigations. In some instances, these individuals are remanded to that institution by the Magistrate when they attend Court.

Figure 141: Age Distribution of Wards Remanded/Committed to the Government Industrial School in 2023

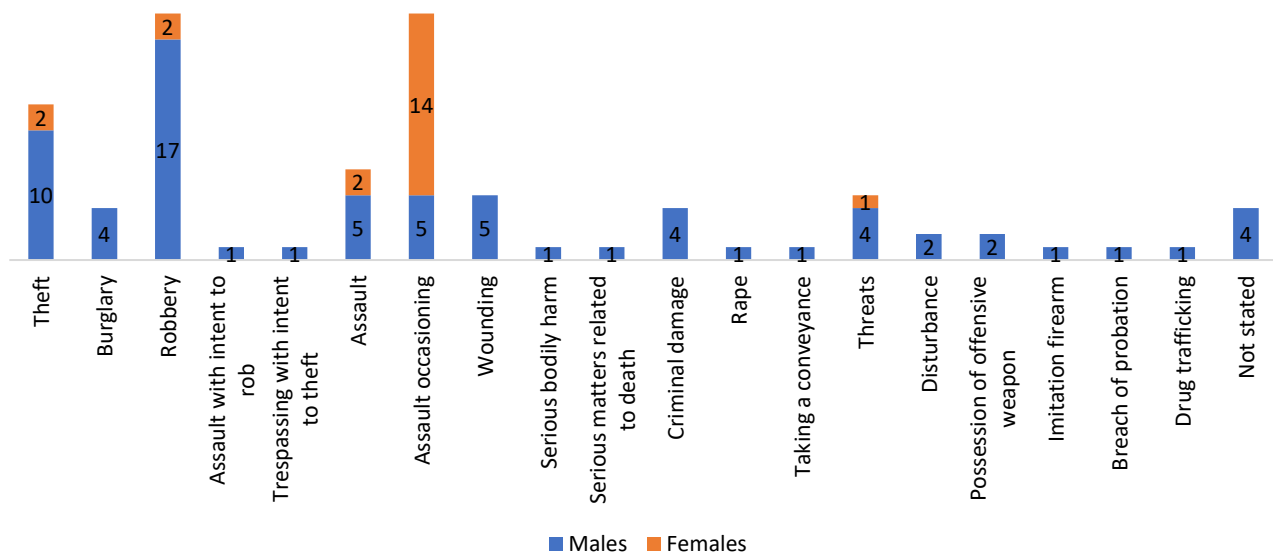


Source: The Government Industrial School

Offences

Figure 142 presents the offences for which wards were admitted to the GIS in 2023. From the Chart it can be seen that they varied considerably and included offences such as Breach of Probation, Criminal Damage, Theft, Burglary, Robbery, Wounding, Rape and Serious Matters Related to Death, just to name a few. Assault Occasioning, Robbery and Theft were the top three offences on record in 2023 (See Figure 142). Of these, Robbery and Theft were more common among males, while Assault Occasioning was the most common offence for females (See Figure 142).

Figure 142: Gender Distribution of the Offences for which Wards were Admitted to the Government Industrial School in 2023



Source: The Government Industrial School

Drug-related Offences

One ward was admitted to the Government Industrial School for a drug offence in 2023. This individual, a 15 year old male, was admitted for Drug Trafficking.

Drug Testing

Drug testing of wards is conducted in accordance with court orders. A total of 11 wards were drug tested during 2023, all of whom were males. Five (45.5%) of the 11 tested positive for marijuana use. In contrast, no wards tested positive for cocaine use during the period under review. Those testing positive for marijuana use were between the ages of 13 and 15 years, with 14 being the modal age (See Table 10). Table 10 presents the demographic data for those testing positive for marijuana use together with their corresponding THC levels. As indicated earlier in this report, a reading of 50 ng/ml or higher is considered positive while a reading greater than zero but less than 50 ng/ml reveals trace amounts of the drug within the individual's system. Higher levels are suggestive of frequent/heavy use and/or use of marijuana that is of high potency.

Table 10: Demographic Information and THC Levels for Wards Testing Positive for Marijuana Use in 2023

Gender	Age (years)	Test Result
Male	14	238 ng/ml
Male	15	311 ng/ml
Male	13	615 ng/ml
Male	14	217 ng/ml
Male	14	701 ng/ml

Source: The Government Industrial School

5.5 The Financial Intelligence Unit

In 2023, the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) received a total of 206 Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs)¹¹ from financial institutions and non-financial designates. These reports typically detail suspicious financial activity by individuals, groups and organizations, and serve as building blocks for investigation. The FIU examines STRs with a view to identify potential crimes such as fraud, money laundering and terrorist financing, and credible reports are forwarded to the Barbados Police Service for further investigation. As such, not all STRs result in a police investigation or persons being charged. This should be considered when interpreting the data presented below.

Only 2 (1.0%) of the STRs received in 2023 were drug-related (See Table 11). However, careful consideration should also be given to the high percentage (63.1%) of STRs for which a predicate offence could not be easily identified as these may be found to have a drug link when investigated (See Table 11).

Table 11: Suspicious Transaction Reports During the Period January 1 to December 31, 2023

Total Number of Suspicious Transaction Reports	Number of Drug-related Suspicious Transaction Reports	Number of Suspicious Transaction Reports for which a Predicate Offence Could not be Easily Identified
206	2 (1.0%)	130 (63.1%)

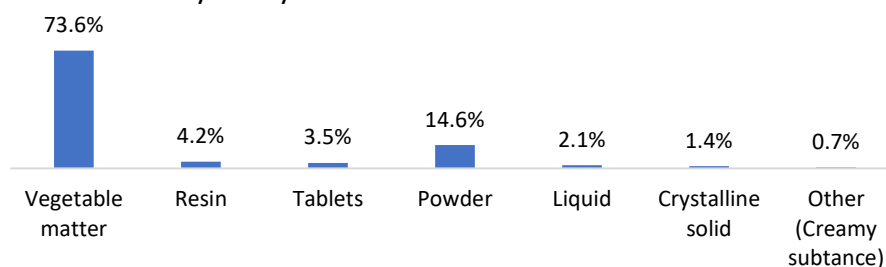
Source: The Financial Intelligence Unit

¹¹ STR data is included in BARDIN reports due to the strong link between money laundering and the drug trade.

5.6 Forensic Sciences Centre

The Forensic Sciences Centre (FSC) analysed 137 drug-related cases in 2023. The characteristics of the cases are presented in Figure 143 which shows that the FSC primarily analysed vegetable matter during the year. There were notably fewer cases which involved the testing of powder, resin, tablets, liquid and crystalline solid (See Figure 143). There was also a single case which involved a 'creamy substance' (See Figure 143).

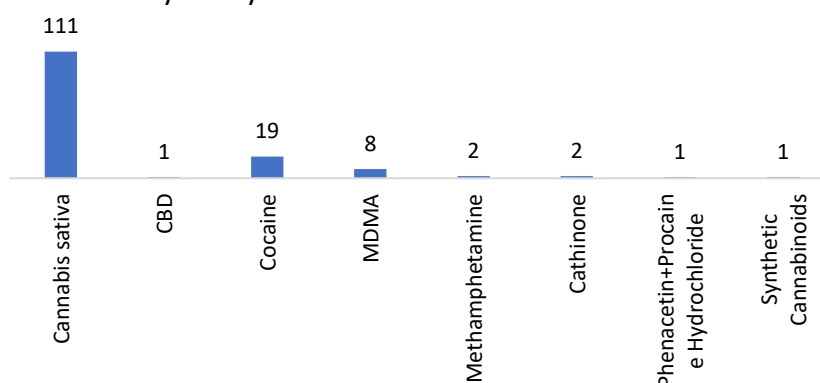
Figure 143: Characteristics of Drug-related Cases Analysed by the Forensic Sciences Centre in 2023



Source: The Forensic Sciences Centre

The controlled drugs identified by the FSC through their laboratory analysis are presented in Figure 144¹². Cannabis sativa was the primary substance identified, distantly followed by cocaine (See Figure 144). There was also a small number of cases in which emerging/non-traditional substances were identified. These included MDMA, methamphetamine, cathinone, cannabidiol (CBD), a combination of phenacetin and procaine hydrochloride, and synthetic cannabinoids, namely MDMB 4en PINACA and 4-Fluoro MDMB BUTICA (See Figure 144).

Figure 144: Controlled Drugs Detected in Cases Analysed by the Forensic Sciences Centre in 2023



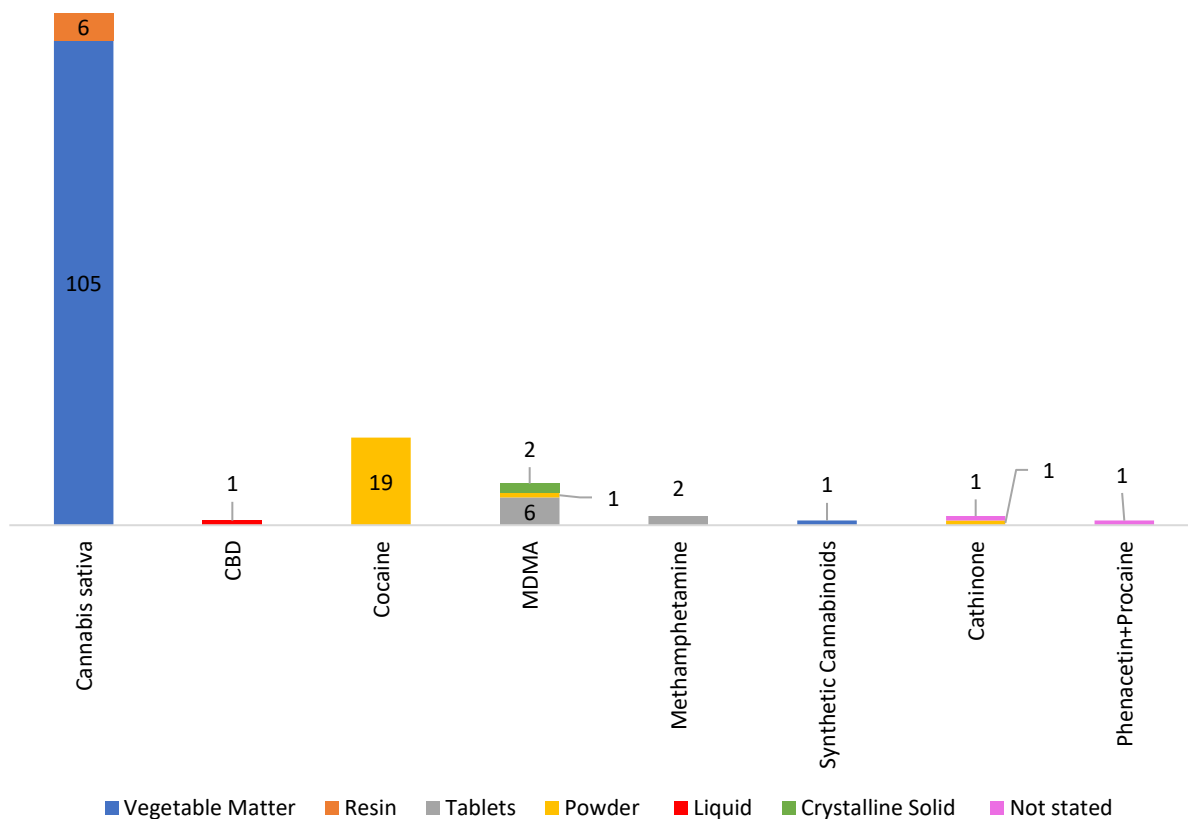
Source: The Forensic Sciences Centre

¹² It should be noted that the number of controlled drugs identified in 2023 is greater than the number of cases analysed, as some cases involved multiple substances.

The data on the identified controlled substances and case characteristics were cross-analysed, the results of which are presented in Figure 145¹³. The Chart shows that cannabis sativa was most commonly identified in vegetable matter. However, there were also a small number of cases where the substance was identified in resin. The lone CBD case involved the presence of the substance in a liquid sample while all cocaine-related cases were in powdered form. Methamphetamine was only identified in tablets, while MDMA was confirmed in tablets, powder and crystalline solid. The synthetic cannabinoids were identified in vegetable matter; and one cathinone case took the form of a powdered sample.

It should be noted that data was not available regarding the type of substance involved in the remaining cathinone case or the combination phenacetin and procaine hydrochloride case.

Figure 145: Controlled Drugs Identified in Cases Analysed by the Forensic Sciences Centre in 2023 by Case Characteristics



Source: The Forensic Sciences Centre

¹³ The numbers presented in Figure 145 are marginally higher than those presented in Figure 144 as some samples contained more than one drug which resulted in double counting to ensure that all drugs were captured in the cross analysis. For example, one tablet contained MDMA and methamphetamine, and was therefore included in the tablet counts for both MDMA and methamphetamine.

6. Select Trend Analysis

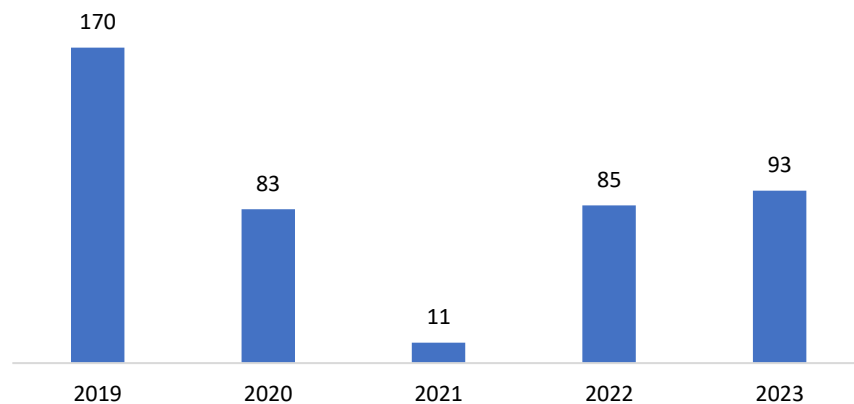
This section includes select trends from across both the demand reduction and supply control sectors.

Prevention and Drug Education

Edna Nicholls Centre

Figure 146 presents the number of students admitted to the ENC between 2019 and 2023. From the Chart, it can be seen that following the initial decreases brought about by COVID and the move to online schooling in 2020 and 2021, the number of admissions increased in 2022 and 2023. This serves as evidence of a slow but steady return to the Centre's pre-COVID admission numbers.

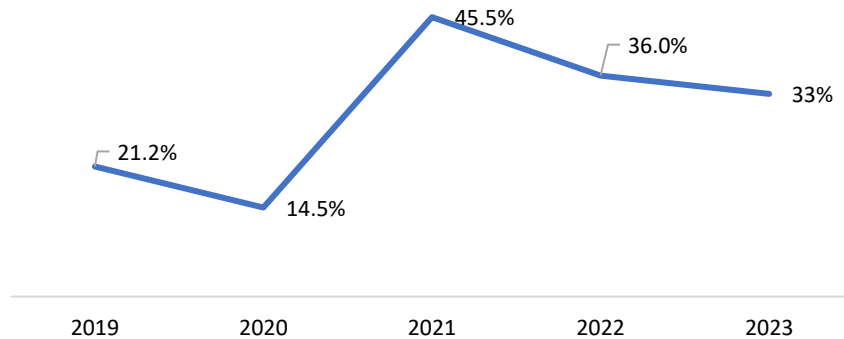
Figure 146: Number of Students Admitted to the Edna Nicholls Centre 2019 -2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

Figure 147 illustrates the percentage of students who tested positive for marijuana use or had trace amounts of the drug in their system from 2019 to 2023. When this data is analyzed alongside the changing admissions numbers shown in Figure 146, it would appear that the sharp increase in the percentage of positive tests observed in 2021 was influenced by the smaller numbers on which the calculations were made. This assumption is supported by the declining percentages observed in 2022 and 2023, which coincide with the increased admissions during that two-year period (See Figures 146 and 147).

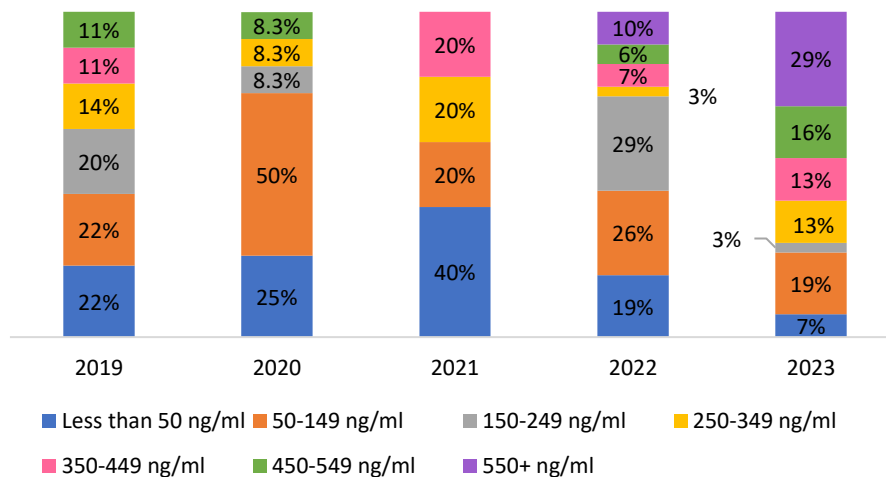
Figure 147: Percentage of Students Testing Positive for Marijuana Use at the Edna Nicholls Centre between 2019 and 2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

Despite the recent overall decline in the percentage of students testing positive for marijuana use at the Edna Nicholls Centre, Figure 148 shows another concerning trend. The Chart presents the THC levels for students testing positive, and it reveals that between 2019 and 2021, no students had THC levels in the 550 ng/ml or over range. However, there were students with levels in this range in 2022 and 2023 (See Figure 148). Furthermore, the percentage of students found to have levels of 550 ng/ml or higher was highest in 2023 (See Figure 148). Also noteworthy is the fact that the THC levels for 2023 were generally higher than those observed earlier in the five-year period (See Figure 148). This is concerning given that, as mentioned earlier in this report, high THC levels are indicative of recent and frequent/chronic use as well as the use of potent marijuana products.

Figure 148: THC Levels for Students Testing Positive for Marijuana Use or Having Trace Amounts of the Drug in the Systems: 2019 - 2023

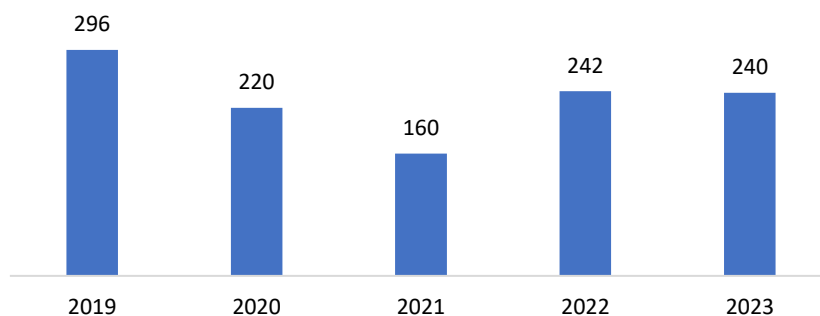


Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

Treatment

The total number of drug treatment admissions for the period 2019 through 2023 is displayed in Figure 149. The Chart shows that the number of admissions in 2023 almost equaled that of 2022. As such, the rebound in admissions which followed the 2020-2021 COVID-related decline was maintained in 2023.

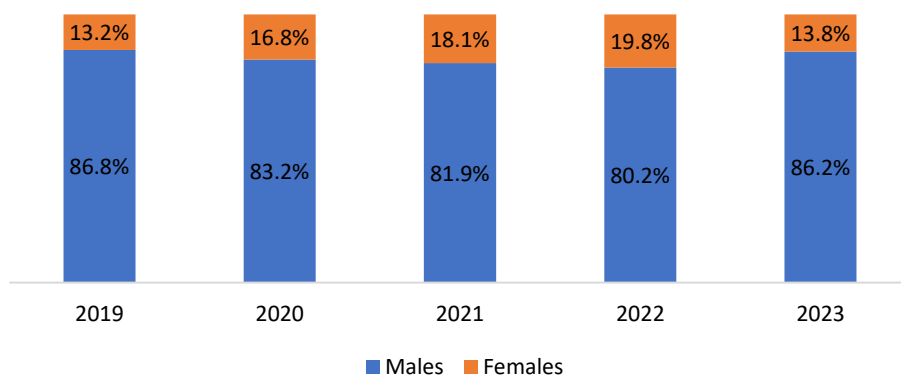
Figure 149: Number of Persons Seeking Drug Treatment in Barbados 2019-2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

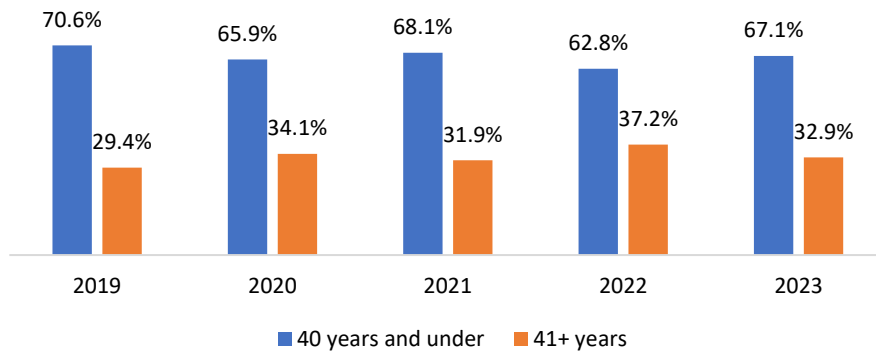
Figures 150 and 151 illustrate the gender and age distribution of treatment clients over the five-year period. The Charts show that the treatment population continues to be dominated by males and persons in the 40 and under age bracket. Figure 150 also shows that the incremental increases in the percentage of females seeking treatment that were observed between 2020 and 2022 were lost in 2023, as the gender distribution for that year returned to that observed in 2019.

Figure 150: Gender Distribution of Persons Seeking Drug Treatment in Barbados 2019 - 2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

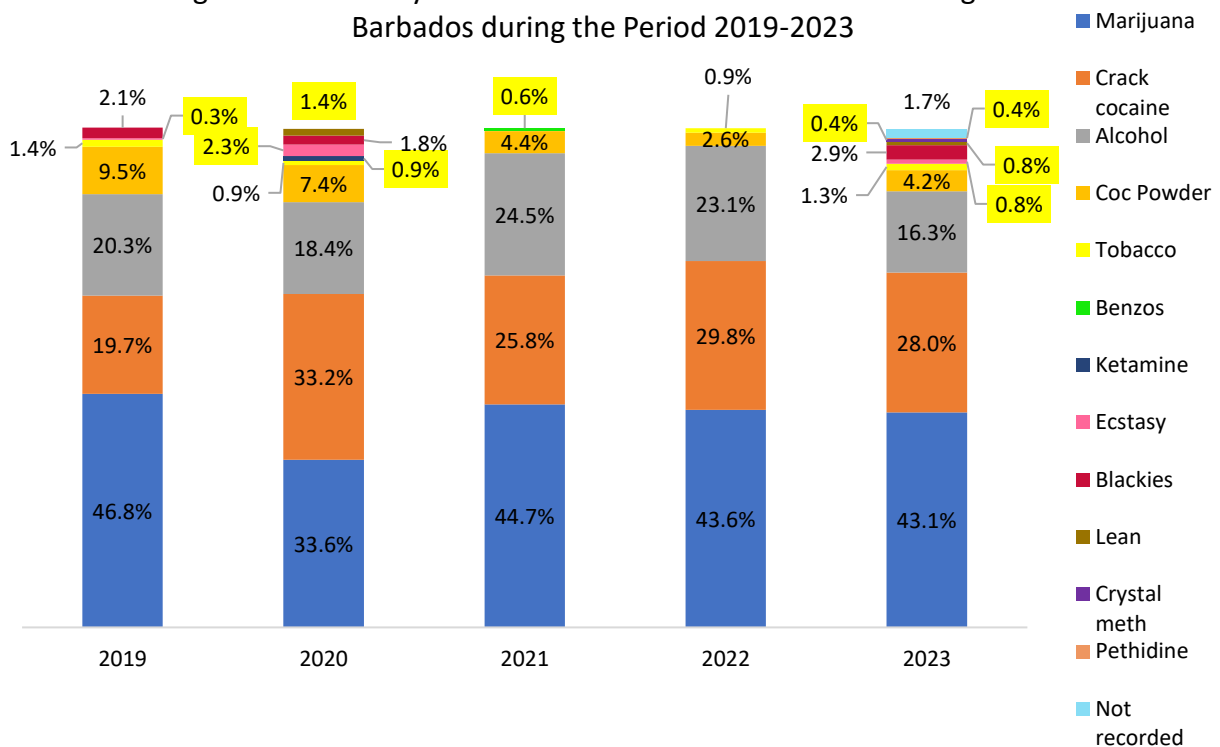
Figure 151: Age Distribution of Persons Seeking Drug Treatment in Barbados during the Period 2019 through 2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

The primary substances motivating the need for treatment between 2019 and 2023 are presented in Figure 152. While marijuana, alcohol and cocaine (crack and powdered) remained the most common substances for which treatment was sought, the Chart highlights the fact that there was a small proportion of clients who sought treatment for synthetic/emerging substances during the period, including ecstasy, lean, crystal meth and pharmaceutical products (Benzodiazepines, Ketamine, Pethidine). For ease of identification, some percentages are highlighted with the Chart.

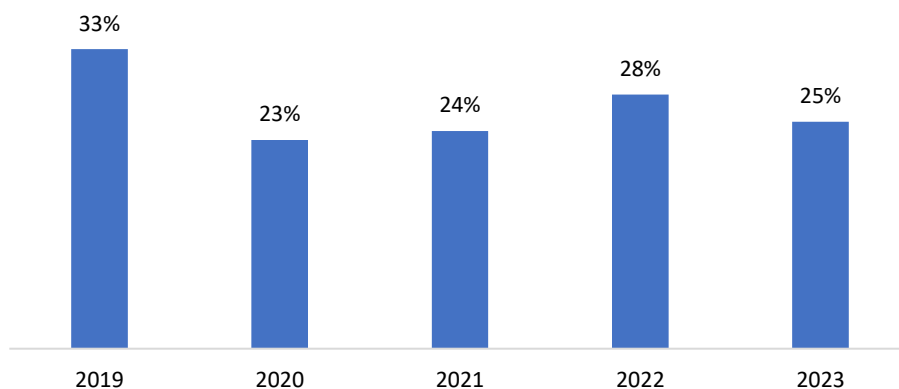
Figure 152: Primary Substances for which Treatment was Sought in Barbados during the Period 2019-2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

Substance use disorders commonly co-occur with mental health disorders and pose both diagnostic and treatment challenges for professionals within the field. Figure 153 presents the percentage of patients with co-occurring disorders at the Psychiatric Hospital between 2019 and 2023. On average, between one-third and one quarter of the patients admitted to the institution during the five-year period had both a mental illness and a substance use disorder (See Figure 153).

Figure 153: Percentage of Patients with Comorbid Diagnoses Including Substance Use Disorders Admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital between 2019 and 2023



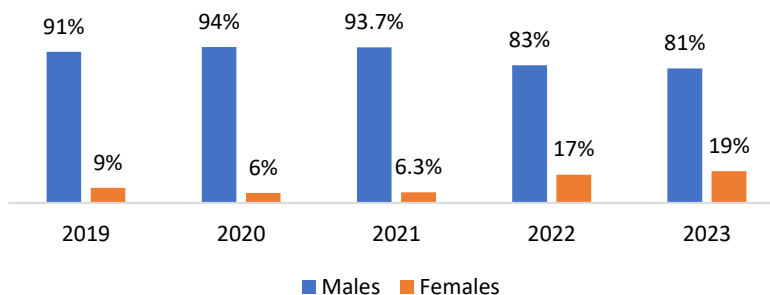
Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

Supply Reduction

Barbados Police Service

Figure 154 illustrates the gender distribution of drug offenders between 2019 and 2023. While the Chart underscores the fact that drug offenders are primarily males, it also highlights the growing number of females being arrested and charged for drug offences. In 2022 and 2023, the percentage of female drug offenders was approximately triple that seen in previous years (See Figure 154).

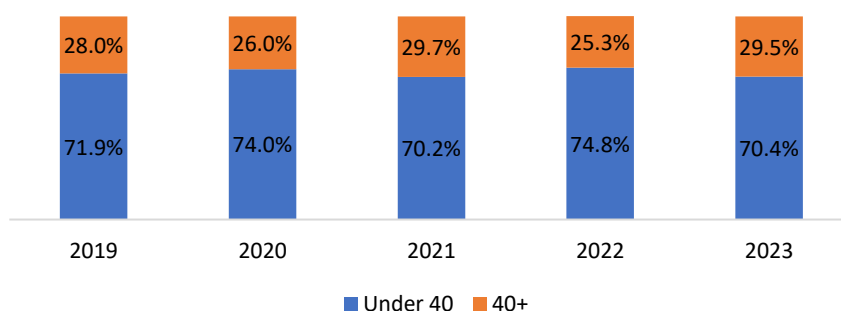
Figure 154: Gender Distribution of Persons Charged with Drug Offences between 2019 and 2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

With regards to age, Figure 155 reveals that persons in the 40 and under age category were the primary drug offenders between 2019 and 2023, with similar percentages across the five-year period. This has been a consistent finding since the inception of BARDIN.

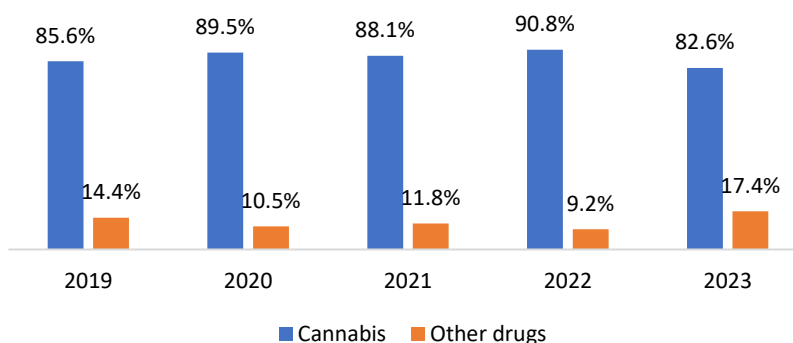
Figure 155: Age Distribution of Persons Charged with Drug Offences between 2019 and 2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

Cannabis offences continue to outnumber all other drug offences; however, Figure 156 shows that the percentage of cannabis offences was lowest in 2023. As such, there was also a concomitant increase in the percentage of drug offences attributable to other substances during this year. Figure 157 provides greater detail¹⁴ and shows that there were notable increases in the offences within both the cocaine and methamphetamine/ecstasy¹⁵ categories in 2023. When compared to the previous years, the 2023 percentages were the highest for both of these categories (See Figure 157). This change should continue to be monitored in the event that is reflective of changes in the local drug market.

Figure 156: Distribution of Cannabis versus All Other Drug Offences between 2019 and 2023

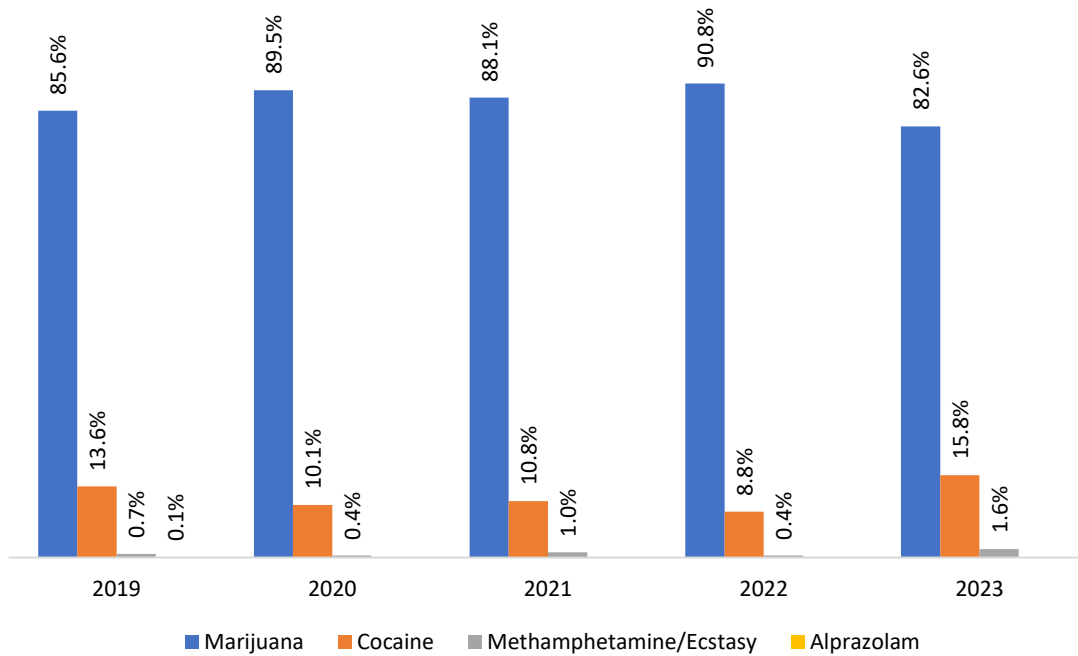


Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

¹⁴ It should be noted that 2019 is the only year in the five-year period (2019-2023) during which Alprazolam offences were recorded. However, due to the small percentage on record (0.1%), the corresponding Alprazolam bar is not visible in Figure 156.

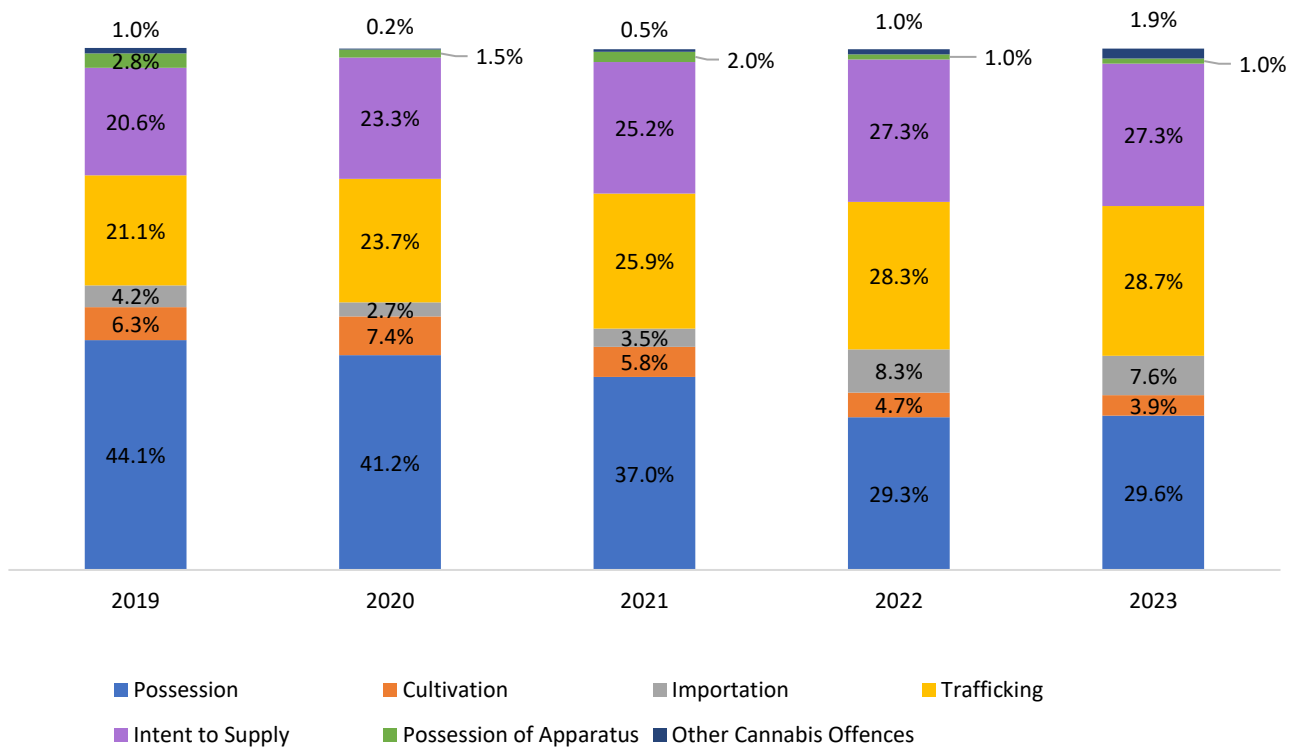
¹⁵ Please note that the Barbados Police Service (TBPS) typically combines methamphetamine and ecstasy into a single category. However, in 2023, there were no methamphetamine offences reported by the TBPS. As such, the 2023 'methamphetamine/ecstasy' data presented in Figure 151 reflects ecstasy offences alone.

Figure 157: Distribution of Drug Offences by Drug Type between 2019 and 2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

Figure 158: Distribution of Cannabis Offences Recorded between 2019 and 2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

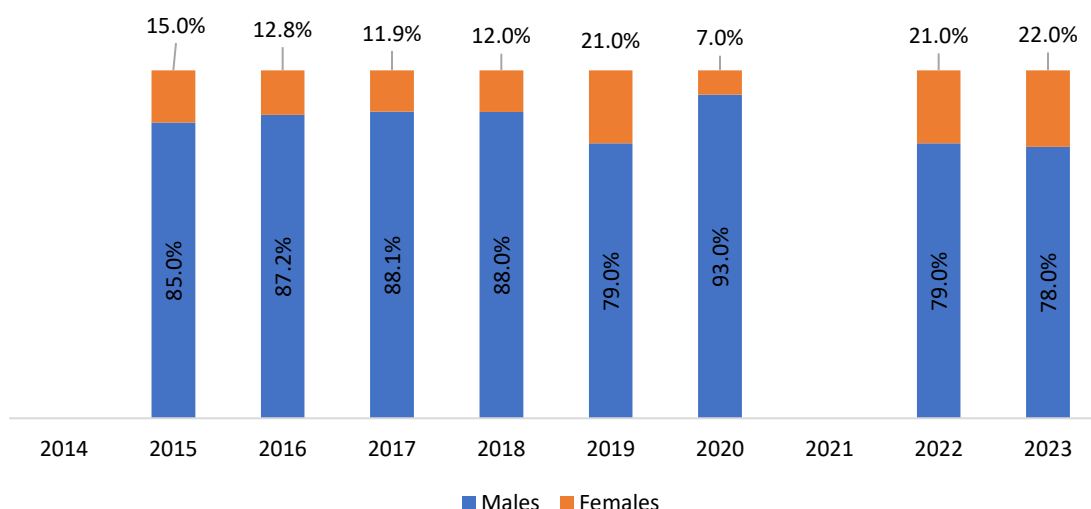
Figure 158 presents the distribution of cannabis offences for 2019 through 2023. From the Chart it can be seen that the decline in Possession cases which was initially observed following the decriminalization of small-scale possession and the introduction of medicinal and sacramental cannabis laws between 2019 and 2021 was maintained in 2023. Likewise, the corresponding increases in Trafficking and Intent to Supply were also maintained (See Figure 158).

Dodds Prison

Given the apparent increase in females being arrested for drug offences, consideration was also given to the gender-related trends among drug offenders admitted to Dodds Prison. While five year trend analyses are presented throughout this section of the Report, the decision was taken to use a ten year analysis in this instance given that: (1) 2021 data was not available for inclusion, and (2) there were marked differences in the gender distributions recorded for 2019 and 2020. As such, it was felt that a ten-year analysis would provide a better assessment of the situation (See Figure 159). It should be noted that in addition to the missing data for 2021, data was also not available for 2014.

From Figure 159, it can be seen that there has also been a general increase in the percentage of women being *incarcerated* for drug offences. With the exception of the 2019 distribution, which is notably similar to that of 2022 and 2023, Figure 159 shows that the percentage of women incarcerated for drug offences between 2015 and 2020 generally ranged from 7 – 15%. Whereas the percentages for 2022 and 2023, increased to 21% and 22% respectively.

Figure 159: Gender Distribution of Persons Incarcerated for Drug Offences between 2014 and 2023

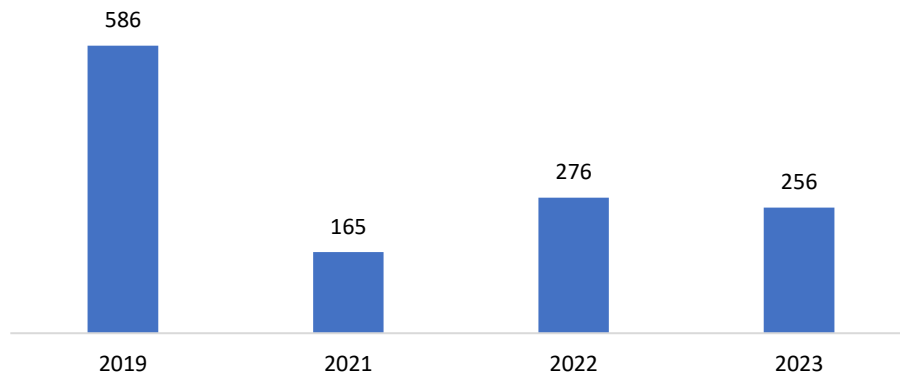


Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit

The number of cannabis Possession cases tried within the law courts during the years 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023 is presented in Figure 160. Much like the aforementioned reduction in the percentage of cannabis Possession offences recorded by the TBPS (presented in Figure 158), there has also been a marked reduction in the number of simple Possession cases tried since the 2019 and 2021 marijuana-related legislative changes took place. Also noteworthy is the fact that the number of cases tried in 2023 was slightly lower than that in 2022 (See Figure 160). However, this additional reduction should be interpreted with caution as the data from one of the Magistrate's Courts was not available for inclusion in the 2023 total. This in turn could have resulted in the observed difference, as most Possession cases are tried at the Magistrate Court level.

Figure 160: Number of Cannabis Possession Cases
Adjudicated in the Law Courts of Barbados: 2019, 2021,
2022 and 2023



Source: The Barbados Drug Information Network

7. Discussion

The 2023 local drug situation remained largely similar to that of previous years, with marijuana, cocaine (crack and powdered) and alcohol being the substances which treatment and supply control professionals were most likely to encounter in their line of work. The profile of treatment seekers and drug offenders also remained generally the same, with males and persons ages 40 and under being the most likely to seek drug treatment or be arrested for drug offences.

Increasing Potency of Marijuana

While marijuana has traditionally been the most commonly misused illegal substance in Barbados, there is growing evidence to suggest an increase in the potency of that which is available and used on island. There have been numerous anecdotal reports to this effect, and the current report highlights a general trend of increasing THC levels among students at the Edna Nicholls Centre and wards of the Government Industrial School who tested positive for marijuana use during the period 2019 through 2023 - with 2023 showing the greatest increase. THC is the psychoactive component in marijuana which is responsible for the drug's intoxicating effects and by extension its addiction potential (Zehra et al., 2018). As was reiterated throughout in this report, high THC levels are indicative of high potency and frequent/recent marijuana use.

When the evidence of increasing marijuana potency is considered against the backdrop of a growing cultural acceptance of marijuana use and decreased perceptions of harm associated with the substance, concerns emerge surrounding the possibility for increased rates of cannabis use disorders and the potential for cannabis overdoses, withdrawal and related harms (Backman, 2023). The possibility of these occurrences among the youth is particularly worrisome as previous BARDIN reports have highlighted that marijuana is the most common primary substance motivating the need for treatment among those under the age of 40, thus suggesting that it is the drug of choice/most problematic drug among our young people.

Given that the increased THC levels are serving as a proxy for marijuana potency in this report, it is recommended that laboratory analyses be used to accurately determine and track the potency and purity of the marijuana which is available on the local market. At present, the testing carried out by the Forensic Sciences Centre simply seeks to confirm the presence/absence of marijuana within a sample and no consideration is given to the purity or potency of the samples analysed.

Details regarding the type, potency and purity of marijuana in circulation on island can and should be used to guide national responses including prevention initiatives, drug treatment approaches and the management of marijuana-related medical emergencies. This is critical as newer, more potent strains of marijuana have the potential for greater negative consequences and therefore may require different approaches to those employed in the past. Possible negative consequences include the experience of marijuana withdrawal syndrome (which can include increased anger, irritability, depression, restlessness, headache, loss of appetite, insomnia and severe marijuana cravings), increased severity of dependence,

increased risk of psychosis and other mental illnesses, and increased risk of cardiac events such as heart attack (Backman, 2023; Stuyt, 2018).

Knowledge of the strains and potency of locally available marijuana can also provide an indication of market preferences. This information may be useful for policy makers should the decision be taken to eventually legalize marijuana and offer the substance for sale through legitimate/regulated channels. Without an awareness of the preferred type(s)/potency of marijuana, policy makers may inadvertently offer undesired marijuana products for sale e.g. low potency products. This in turn could inadvertently fuel the black market, as consumers go in search of their desired products (Meadows, 2019). Black market marijuana is potentially hazardous as it is not subjected to quality controls and can contain dangerous additives which could threaten the health of those who consume it (Meadows, 2019).

Considering the Potential Impact of Medicinal Marijuana

Given the apparent increase in the potency of locally available marijuana and the possible harms associated with its use, it is essential to explore every avenue to curb the misuse of this substance. One area for consideration is medicinal marijuana. While evidence regarding its broader societal impact is mixed, with some international research finding no clear link between medicinal marijuana laws and increased use, there have been studies which suggest that these laws may inadvertently contribute to the perception of marijuana as a harmless substance, potentially fueling recreational use (e.g. Cerdá, Wall, Keyes, Galea & Hasin, 2012; Hollingsworth, Wing & Bradford, 2022; Pacula, Powell, Heaton & Sevigny, 2015). This potentiality suggests that proactive measures to raise public awareness may be warranted. As such, it is recommended that a public education campaign which distinguishes between medicinal and recreational marijuana be launched. To maximize impact, it is recommended that both traditional and social media platforms be used to disseminate information. Special attention should also be given to persons in the previously highlighted 40 and under age group. To ensure the dissemination of accurate and balanced information, it is suggested that the campaign be jointly led by the NCSA and the Barbados Medicinal Licensing Authority.

Growing Presence of Emerging Drugs

The present report reiterates the ongoing diversification of the local drug scene which has been highlighted in previous BARDIN reports. The first signs of non-traditional/emerging drugs recorded by BARDIN date back to its first publication (2011 report published in 2013) and over the years have included sporadic instances of persons being treated for their use of substances such as ecstasy, methamphetamine, amphetamine, heroin and lean as well as small scale police seizures of ecstasy and methamphetamine and a small number of persons charged with ecstasy and methamphetamine-related offences. While still few in number, the cases have increased in recent years, and have expanded to include substances such as ketamine, benzodiazepines and pethidine – particularly within the treatment sector. Other evidence of emerging drugs can be found in the 2023 methamphetamine and synthetic cannabinoid alerts issued by the local Early Warning System.

A recently concluded multi-country qualitative study suggests ecstasy to be the preferred synthetic/emerging drug in Barbados, followed by methamphetamine which is considerably less

common (National Council on Substance Abuse [NCSA] & Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission [CICAD], 2024). Ecstasy is mainly present in tablet form, though the Forensic Sciences Centre has confirmed the substance in powder and crystalline form in a small number of cases. Likewise, methamphetamine is also commonly found in tablet form. With regards to users, these are typically young persons – particularly young males.

Concerns surround the public health harms which vary from substance to substance and can include, but are not limited to: heart attacks, strokes, damage to major organs and death (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], April 2024; National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], November 2024). The use of synthetic and other non-traditional/emerging drugs has also been linked to mental health effects such as addiction, anxiety, confusion, paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, insomnia, and violent behaviour, some of which can persist for many years after an individual ceases use (NIDA, April 2024; NIDA, November 2024).

The Need for Toxicology Testing Protocols and Resources

One of the significant dangers associated with the use of emerging/synthetic drugs is the fact that persons cannot be certain of the contents of the drugs which they are ingesting. This poses particular challenges for health professionals whose efforts to treat overdose cases and adverse reactions are hindered by the patients' lack of knowledge and the lack of testing protocols/requirements and facilities. At present, there are no protocols that allow for drug testing in specific situations (e.g. health emergencies) and there is also a lack of testing facilities/resources to identify the use of emerging drugs. Without knowledge of the chemicals ingested, it can be difficult for medical personnel and first responders to effectively treat those affected. As such, it is recommended that urgent efforts be made to address these shortcomings and facilitate toxicology testing in emergency situations.

Overdose Surveillance

The value of toxicology results goes beyond the immediate medical treatment setting. These findings can be informative for other medical personnel, first responders, and professionals in the treatment and prevention sectors, as they can identify the substances currently being misused and most likely to result in medical emergencies. This information is invaluable for accurately diagnosing and treating suspected overdose cases and for shaping targeted prevention and harm-reduction strategies (American Medical Association, n.d.; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2024).

For these reasons, it is recommended that the sharing of de-identified toxicology results be mandated and supported through a formalized surveillance mechanism. Ideally, this would involve the establishment of a dedicated surveillance system capable of delivering timely, comprehensive data on both fatal and non-fatal overdoses. Such a system would also enable the tracking of drug-specific overdose prevalence rates, thereby providing a clearer picture of emerging trends.

In the event that resources for a standalone system are unavailable, overdose data could be integrated into existing medical surveillance systems already present on island. If this approach is taken, measures

should be implemented to ensure that the information is accessible to those working in treatment and prevention, allowing for a coordinated response to the challenges posed by substance misuse.

Forensic Testing in Barbados

The previously mentioned qualitative study also highlighted another limitation in the national response to synthetic/emerging drugs, and that is the resource constraints which severely limit the ability of the Forensic Sciences Centre to identify a wide range of synthetic/emerging drugs within the samples analysed by its laboratory. This is a critical shortcoming as knowledge of the substances present on island is needed to guide the development of appropriate policies and programmes to stave off public health and safety crises which can emerge as a result of synthetic drugs within a country. Additional staff, new equipment/upgrades to existing equipment and testing standards were among the cited resource needs which should be addressed in order to enhance forensic testing in Barbados.

Legal Responses to Emerging Drugs

The legal framework plays a pivotal role in shaping a country's response to drug-related issues, encompassing both the laws and the actions of law enforcement and judicial authorities. In Barbados, the cornerstone of this framework is the *Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, Cap. 131*, which outlines controlled substances and prescribes penalties for various drug offences.

However, a review of sentences for methamphetamine-related offences in recent years reveals a concerning trend. Compared to cocaine-related offences, penalties for methamphetamine cases have been less stringent, with many offenders receiving a CRD, R&D or fine, regardless of their offence. Given that the law provides for harsher penalties, this disparity suggests a potential gap in the judiciary's understanding of the dangers posed by synthetic drugs, particularly their potency and the small quantities required to cause significant harm.

To address this issue, it is recommended that an education campaign be developed to enhance the awareness of lawyers and members of the judiciary regarding synthetic drugs and their risks. This initiative should be spearheaded by the NCSA and designed to provide up-to-date, evidence-based information on the impact of these substances.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that the *Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, Cap. 131*, does not currently encompass all of the emerging substances in circulation, creating legal loopholes that could be exploited. To close these gaps, a comprehensive review and update of the legislation should be considered, ensuring that it adequately addresses the evolving drug landscape.

Female Drug Offenders

There was an increase in the proportion of women charged with, and incarcerated for, drug offences in 2022 and 2023. This is notable as previous BARDIN reports have highlighted males as the primary drug offenders on island, typically accounting for approximately nine out of every 10 drug-related arrests annually. Likewise, men have also traditionally dominated the drug-related incarceration statistics in

Barbados. While continued monitoring will be necessary to determine with certainty if the increase in female drug offenders represents an emerging trend, the potential implications for individuals, families and professionals within the prevention, treatment and rehabilitative sectors warrants discussion within this report.

The Impact of Incarceration on Mothers and their Children

At the micro level, consideration must be given to the needs and issues likely to be faced by the female offenders themselves as well as their families. Across the globe, a large percentage of female offenders are mothers with minor children, with rates varying from approximately 50% to as high as 70% depending on the geographic region and the study in question (Budd, 2024; Nicholls, Cruise, Greig & Hinz, 2015; Pittaro, 2023); and many studies have highlighted the negative impact which maternal incarceration can have on both mothers and their children.

Incarcerated mothers who are separated from their children are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, and have tendencies towards self-harm (Staton, Tillson, Levi, Dickson, Webster & Leukefeld, 2023). Parenting stress is a critical factor in this regard and is related to the occurrence of these psychiatric issues as well as *higher levels of* depression and anxiety among incarcerated mothers (Milavetz, Pritzl, Muentner & Poehlmann-Tynan, 2021). In this instance, sources of parenting stress include missing important milestones in their children's development, not being able to hug or hold their children, and not being able to play a role in ensuring their children's well-being and academic success (Milavetz et al, 2021).

It has also been posited that a mother's separation from their children during incarceration can potentially exacerbate existing mental illnesses and their symptoms. This is noteworthy as research has suggested that there are high levels of mental illness among the incarcerated population, with rates for most mental health disorders being approximately twice as high as those found in the general population (Favril, Rich, Hard & Fazel, 2024).

Maternal incarceration can also have a significant impact on the mother-child relationship, as many correctional system processes and procedures exacerbate separation and make it difficult for mothers to maintain a connection with their offspring (Fowler, Rossiter, Power, Dawson, Jackson & Roche, 2022). This not only affects the mothers themselves, but also the children who are already a vulnerable group due to their family's likely disadvantaged circumstances and their likely exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) e.g. inadequate housing, food insecurity, poverty, a lack of personal safety due to violence, and the experience of trauma. ACEs such as these have been linked to poor outcomes for the affected individuals, including physical and mental health issues, the development of substance use disorders, etc. (Howard, Gwenzi, Taylor & Wilke, 2023).

While children are impacted by both maternal and paternal incarceration, it has been suggested that having an incarcerated mother can have a greater negative effect as mothers are more likely to have been the primary caregiver before they were admitted to prison (Dallaire, Zeman, & Thrash, 2015). As such, maternal incarceration represents a traumatic event for children and increases the likelihood of disruptions to their living situation, with many children having to move in with extended family members

or go into foster care, both of which can be particularly stressful (Staton et al., 2023). Research has also suggested that children of incarcerated parents (mothers and/or fathers) are more likely to experience stigma, bullying and teasing as a result (McGee, Davis, Saunders-Goldson, Fletcher, & Fisher, 2017).

Experiences such as these, make it no surprise that children and adolescents of incarcerated mothers are more likely to exhibit high levels of anxiety, depression and aggressive behaviours, and they are also at greater risk for problem behaviour, delinquency, expulsion from school, criminal activity, and drug use – with the latter often used as a coping mechanism (Dallaire et al., 2015; Martin, 2017; McGee et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the family members of incarcerated individuals are often the “hidden victims”, who are not acknowledged and who receive little to no support at the personal or systemic levels (Martin, 2017). While it cannot be predicted how individual children will react or respond in the face of maternal incarceration, studies suggest that the quality and strength of the mother-child relationship can be a determining factor (Martin, 2017).

It is therefore clear that incarcerated mothers and their offspring need specialized programming and services which respond to their unique needs and challenges. In this regard, it is recommended that the corrections professionals at the Barbados Prison Service work together with other relevant agencies, such as the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, the Child Care Board, the Barbados Police Service and the NCSA and others, to establish a coordinated agency network with a suite of services tailored for this population. As always, evidence-based approaches are best and efforts can initially be guided by the work of the National Institute of Corrections in the United States of America, and their 2019 document: *Model Practices for Parents in Prisons and Jails: Reducing Barriers to Family Connections*. Another excellent resource is the document *Evidence-based and Promising Programs and Practices to Support Parents who are Incarcerated and their Children and Families* published in 2024 by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center.

Examples of evidence-based approaches which are described and promoted within these documents include:

- offering free phone calls and free video visiting for incarcerated parents and their children to allow them to maintain their connection.
- allowing child-friendly contact visiting to maintain parent-child attachment and reduce children’s sense of abandonment.
- providing visit coaching where coaches work with incarcerated parents, their children and families to prepare them for what to expect during visits and to prepare parents for difficult questions which children may have.
- implementing parent education programmes developed specifically for parents who are incarcerated and the issues they may face.
- offering mentorship programmes for the children of incarcerated parents.
- providing age-appropriate education about parental incarceration for children.
- providing individual and group therapy for all involved, particularly the children.

(Peterson et al., 2019 ; Pfeiffer/CSG Justice Center, 2024)

Other Critical Issues Which Affect Female Inmates

Substance Use Disorders. High rates of substance use disorders (SUDs) have been found among criminal offenders across the globe, with females often outnumbering males in this regard. In fact, some international studies have suggested that as many as 50% of incarcerated women have an SUD, while others have shown that, when compared, women are more likely to attribute their illegal activities to drug use than men (Staton et al., 2023). These findings highlight the need to ensure adequate access to drug treatment for incarcerated women in an attempt to reduce future drug use and, by extension, reoffending, as incarceration alone does not adequately address SUDs (Chandler, Fletcher & Volkow, 2009).

At present, most inmates treated within the Inmate Drug Rehabilitation and Counselling (IDRC) Programme are referred by the law courts; and unfortunately, some individuals who need treatment may not be identified during their adjudication process. In an effort to increase the likelihood of inmates (female and male) receiving the help that they need, it is recommended that there be routine screening for SUDs on admission to Dodds Prison, and that those whose screens are positive be referred for further assessment and treatment as necessary.

It is recognized that treatment resources are severely limited at Dodds Prison, evidenced by the lone counsellor within the IDRC programme and the long wait times for admission. This is further supported by the Barbados Prison Service's call for social workers, psychologists and additional support staff for the IDRC programme which was highlighted during an IDRC assessment conducted in 2020 by Dr. Jonathan Yearwood, Research and Information Officer, at the NCSA. As such, it is also recommended that the IDRC programme be expanded to increase capacity and by extension allow for higher rates of admission and shorter waiting periods. This is critical as longer wait times for entry into treatment programmes are generally associated with poorer treatment outcomes and individuals not following through with treatment (Redko, Rapp, & Carlson, 2006).

Consideration should also be given to the fact that male and female inmates differ on a number of issues related to drug use e.g. type and frequency of drug use, childhood family environments, adult social environments, mental and physical health (Langan & Pelissier, 2001). Such differences should be taken into account when determining the most appropriate approach(es) to treatment, and suggest that female inmates would likely benefit from a treatment programme which is tailored to meet their specific needs (Langan & Pelissier, 2003). Dodds Prison currently offers the same drug treatment programme to both males and females; and it is therefore also recommended that the possibility of offering gender-specific drug treatment within the IDRC programme be explored and the specific treatment needs of female inmates be identified.

Trauma and its effects. Lifetime trauma and victimization are common among female inmates, with rates being disproportionately higher than those found among male prisoners (Staton et al., 2023). This includes both childhood and adulthood traumas e.g. sexual, physical or emotional abuse, witnessing violence between family members, parental conflict, etc. (Kelman, Gribble, Harvey, Palmer & MacManus, 2024). Traumatic experiences can have significant, long-lasting effects on an individual, including: the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, SUDs and other mental health disorders, suicidal and

self-injurious tendencies, emotional dysregulation, increased arrests and imprisonment, just to name a few (Kelman et al., 2024).

The experience of imprisonment itself can also be traumatizing due to being separated from loved ones, being disempowered, witnessing others in distress, the experience of sexual and physical assaults, etc. (Douglas, Plugge & Fitzpatrick, 2009). Such incarceration-based trauma can compound the issues caused by previous traumas and negatively affect those who are afflicted with mental illnesses and substance use disorders (Kelman et al., 2024).

Addressing the issues of trauma against the backdrop of mental illnesses and substance use disorders presents a complex challenge for practitioners within the prison system; and as corrections professionals seek appropriate approaches, there has been a growing interest in the use of Trauma Informed Care and Practice (TICP) within international prison settings – particularly among female inmates. This emerging approach to prison healthcare and operational culture recognizes the impact of trauma and involves modifying prison practices to avoid re-traumatizing individuals (Warren, 2023). TICP can include, but is not limited to:

- providing gender-responsive and trauma-informed training for prison staff as well as training in the areas of crisis intervention and de-escalation.
- adapting custodial and operational practices in trauma-informed ways to provide women with choices and increase their feelings of safety and trust, e.g. using behavioural interventions and de-escalation strategies before resorting to restraints, force or restrictive housing; allowing women to choose between fully/partially unclothed body searches, verbally walking women through body searches, etc.
- offering inmates evidence-based programmes designed specifically to address trauma.
- offering other activities shown to help with trauma e.g. art and pet therapy, yoga, etc.
- implementing programmes to support family connections and parenting as these can also be useful in mitigating the effects of trauma by promoting social connection, resilience and well-being.

(Park, 2022)

It should be noted that partnerships with Governmental and Non-governmental agencies can assist in the implementation of TICP as correctional staff often lack the necessary training and expertise to effectively carry out the various approaches and respond to the women's needs (Park, 2022). Therefore, the women would benefit from services offered directly by professionals who specialize in the area(s).

When the foregoing is considered in conjunction with the increasing rates of female drug offenders, it is recommended that consideration be given to the applicability and suitability of TICP within the Barbadian prison setting. This would require the conduct of research and needs assessments to determine the way forward, if any, in this regard.

Implications for Prevention Professionals

The recent increases in female drug offending and incarcerations also have potential implications for those working in the drug prevention sector. In addition to the fact that many women attribute their

illegal activities to drug use, studies have also highlighted higher rates of pre-incarceration drug use and substance use disorders among women when compared with men (van de Baan, Montanari, Royuela & Lemmens, 2022), thus underscoring the need for gender-based prevention interventions with a specific focus on females, particularly those at higher risk for drug use e.g. trauma victims, those with a history of adverse childhood experiences, etc. Further justification for programmes targeting women and girls can be found in the 2023 reduction in female treatment seekers which followed three consecutive years of increases.

It should be noted that gender-based approaches to drug prevention align with the hemispheric perspective that gender equality is a cross-cutting issue which should be incorporated into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies and programmes in an effort to ensure that both men and women benefit equally and have equal opportunities to attain their full potential and human rights (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission [CICAD], 2019).

Summary of the Recommendations to Enhance the National Response to the Drug Situation

Below is a summary of the recommendations emerging from the foregoing discussion.

1. To appropriately respond to possible increases in marijuana potency on island, the purity and potency of this substance should be assessed and tracked by the Forensic Sciences Centre. The information can be used to inform drug prevention initiatives, approaches to drug treatment, the management of marijuana-related medical emergencies and decisions related to any future legalization of the drug.
2. All avenues to curb the misuse of marijuana should be explored, including the potentiality for medicinal marijuana to inadvertently contribute to the view that marijuana is a harmless substance and by extension fuel recreational use. As such, consideration should be given to a public education campaign which distinguishes between medicinal and recreational marijuana, with a specific focus on those in the 40 and under age category. This campaign should make use of traditional and social media and be jointly conducted by the NCSA and the Barbados Cannabis Licensing Authority to ensure the dissemination of accurate and balanced information.
3. Effective national responses to the issue of synthetic/emerging drugs requires an awareness of the substances available in Barbados. To facilitate the requisite laboratory analysis, the capacity of the Forensic Sciences Centre should be expanded through the provision of additional staff, new equipment/upgrades to existing equipment and the relevant testing standards.
4. The legal landscape is a critical element of any national response to drug-related issues. As such, a comprehensive review and update of the *Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, Cap. 131* should be conducted with a view to address any legal loopholes which may exist regarding synthetic/emerging substances. Efforts should also be made to educate the legal fraternity and judiciary about the dangers posed by synthetic drugs, their potency and the small quantities required to cause significant harm. It is believed that increasing the awareness of this population may lead to much-needed harsher penalties for drug offences involving synthetic substances such as methamphetamine and ecstasy.

5. Overdoses and adverse reactions can follow the use of synthetic/emerging drugs. Knowledge of the substances ingested is key to the delivery of effective medical care by first responders and professionals in the medical field. As such, protocols that allow for the conduct of drug testing in medical emergency situations should be established and the resources needed to facilitate such testing be provided.
6. Outside of the immediate medical treatment setting, the findings of toxicology results can prove useful to other medical personnel, first responders, drug treatment providers and prevention specialists. Such information can aid in the diagnosis and treatment of suspected overdose cases and shape targeted prevention and harm-reduction strategies. As such, a formalized overdose surveillance mechanism should be established. Depending on resource availability, this could take the form of a standalone overdose surveillance system or be integrated into existing medical surveillance systems present on island.
7. The recent increase in female drug offenders suggests the need to consider and address issues which directly affect female inmates including: the impact of incarceration on mothers and their children, the occurrence of substance use disorders and a history of traumatic experiences. Approaches should include: initiatives to maintain mother-child relationships; access to screening for substance use disorders on admission to prison as well as timely assessment and drug treatment; access to gender specific drug treatment programmes as needed; the use of trauma-informed approaches to prison healthcare and operational culture (as appropriate) to avoid re-traumatization for persons who have a history of trauma and adverse childhood experiences. These suggestions will require:
 - a. An exploration of evidence-based programming aimed at maintaining/promoting family connections in the context of imprisonment. This can be buttressed by local research/needs assessments on the topic.
 - b. The conduct of needs assessments to determine the most appropriate drug treatment methods for women in Dodds Prison as well as the need for/best approaches to trauma informed care and practice for this group.
 - c. Expansion of the Inmate Drug Rehabilitation and Counselling Programme to allow for increased capacity and decreased wait times.
8. To mitigate the negative effects of maternal incarceration on children, special attention should be paid to the offspring of female inmates who are often among the “hidden victims”. Efforts should be made to encourage personal and systemic support for this vulnerable group and can include approaches to maintaining the mother-child connection, mentorship programmes, age appropriate education about parental incarceration and individual/group therapy as needed. As in the case of the female inmates, efforts for the children should also be guided by existing evidence-based approaches and supported by local research/needs assessments.
9. To ensure the provision of comprehensive support to incarcerated mothers and their children, the corrections professionals at the Barbados Prison Service should partner with relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies to establish an agency network with a suite of services tailored for this population.

10. The recent increase in female drug offending together with research findings which suggest that women are more likely to attribute their illegal activities to drug use and to have higher rates of pre-incarceration drug use and substance use disorders highlight the need for gender-based drug prevention initiatives. It is recommended that drug prevention professionals consider this when designing and implementing programmes, and place a special emphasis on females who are at increased risk for drug use.

8. Conclusion

This Report highlights that the 2023 local drug landscape remained largely similar to that of previous years. Alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine continued to be the most prevalent substances recorded, while males aged 40 and under were once again the demographic most likely to seek drug treatment or face legal consequences for drug-related offenses.

However, several noteworthy developments have emerged, including a potential increase in the potency of locally available marijuana and a growing presence of synthetic/emerging drugs. The latter have expanded in recent years to include ecstasy, methamphetamine, amphetamine, lean, heroin, ketamine, benzodiazepines, and pethidine. The presence of high-potency and synthetic/emerging drugs poses significant public health and safety risks, underscoring the need for a robust national response informed by a thorough understanding of the substances involved, including their purity and potency.

Advanced laboratory testing and continuous monitoring will play a critical role in addressing these challenges, necessitating increased investment in resources for the Forensic Sciences Centre. Additionally, toxicology and drug testing in medical facilities will be essential for effectively managing cases involving overdoses and adverse drug reactions. The implementation of legislation to mandate such testing in emergency situations and the provision of the necessary testing resources will be vital in supporting these efforts.

Another notable change is the increase in female drug offenders. This, together with the 2023 decrease in female drug treatment clients suggests the need for gender specific drug prevention programmes - with an emphasis on females - as well as programmes and interventions tailored to meet the unique needs of incarcerated females and their children. The latter will require collaboration between the Barbados Prison Service and other governmental and non-governmental agencies to ensure the delivery of a comprehensive suite of services which adequately addresses the issues facing these vulnerable populations. Efforts can be guided by international evidence-based practices in conjunction with local needs assessments and research.

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