

DRUG USE BEHAVIOURS AMONG STUDENTS IN THE CARIBBEAN

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE POLICY IN
THE FIELD OF DRUG ABUSE
PREVENTION

OCTOBER 29 TO 31, 2014

Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago


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OUTLINE

- Illicit drug use - Marijuana
- Focus on
 - prevalence
 - Perceptions and attitudes (access and harmfulness)



ILLCIT DRUG USE: MARIJUANA

- Use of marijuana is embedded in some cultures in the Caribbean. Survey results show that marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug among Caribbean students.
 - There are large variations in prevalence rates from country to country ranging from the lowest rates in Haiti (2.2%, 1.05% and 0.63% for lifetime, past year and past month respectively) to the highest in Dominica (29.58%, 17.47% and 11.62% for lifetime, past year and past month respectively).
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ILLCIT DRUG USE: MARIJUANA

- Almost 30% of the students in Dominica have tried marijuana at least once in their lives and 17.5% have used it in the past year with about 12% currently using the drug.
- St. Lucia and Grenada are the only other countries where more than 25% of the students have experimented with marijuana at some point in their lives.
- Similarly for past year use, Dominica and St. Lucia have the highest rates of use (both greater than 15%) and Grenada's is just below 15%.
- On the other end of the spectrum, Haiti and Suriname have very low past year prevalence—each less than 5%. Trinidad and Tobago is also on the lower end of the scale, reporting just over 5% prevalence in the past year.



PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES DRIVING USE

- Rising marijuana use reflects changing perceptions and attitudes.
- Historically, as perception of risks goes down, use goes up (and vice versa).
- Young people are showing heightened perception of easy access to marijuana and decreased perception that marijuana is dangerous.

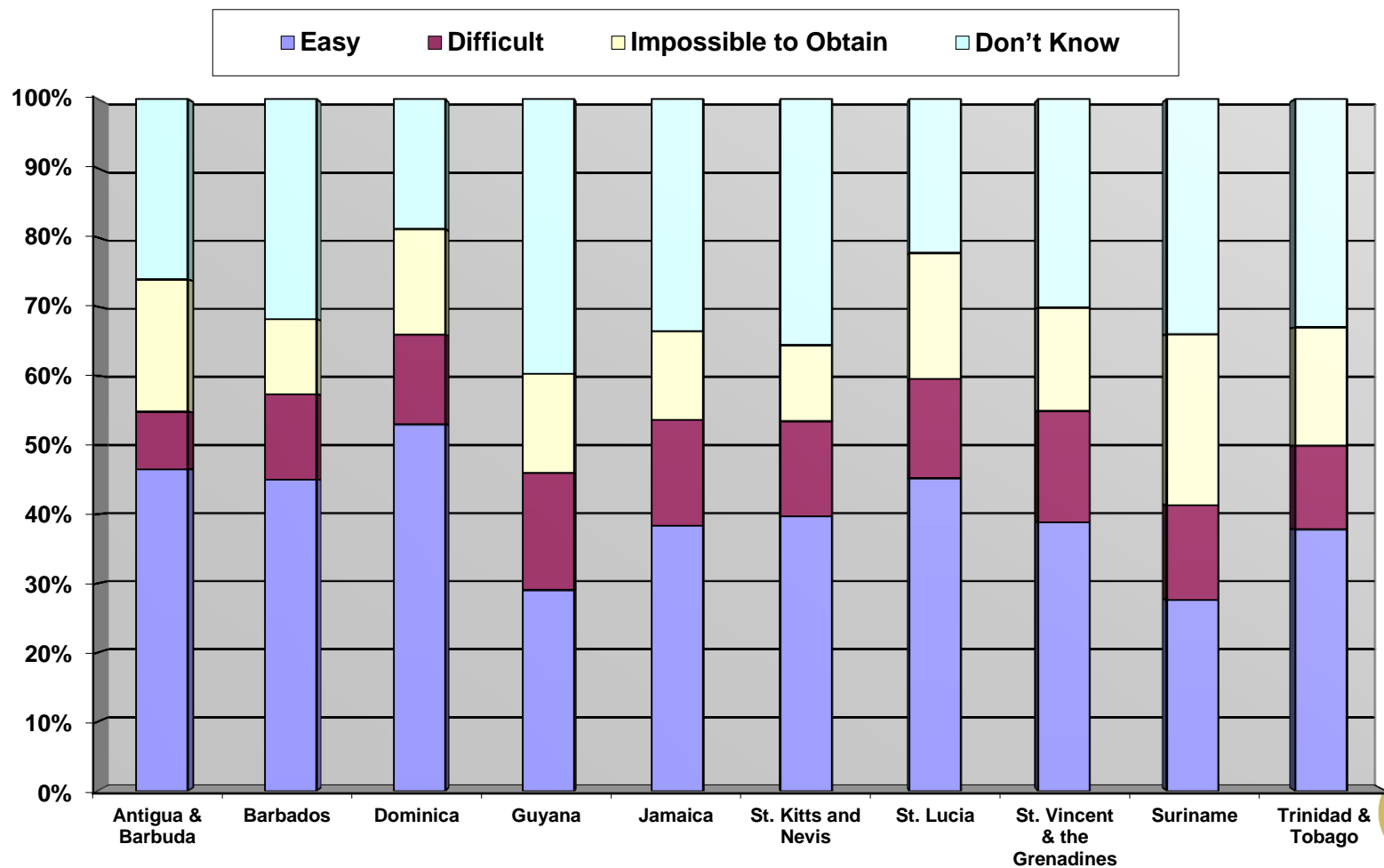


ACCESS TO MARIJUANA

- In the majority of countries—seven of the ten countries reporting—four to five of every ten students indicated that they could access marijuana easily.
- Except for Antigua and Barbuda, 12-17% of students in all reporting countries felt that they could access marijuana with some difficulty



EASE OF OBTAINING MARIJUANA



ACCESS TO MARIJUANA

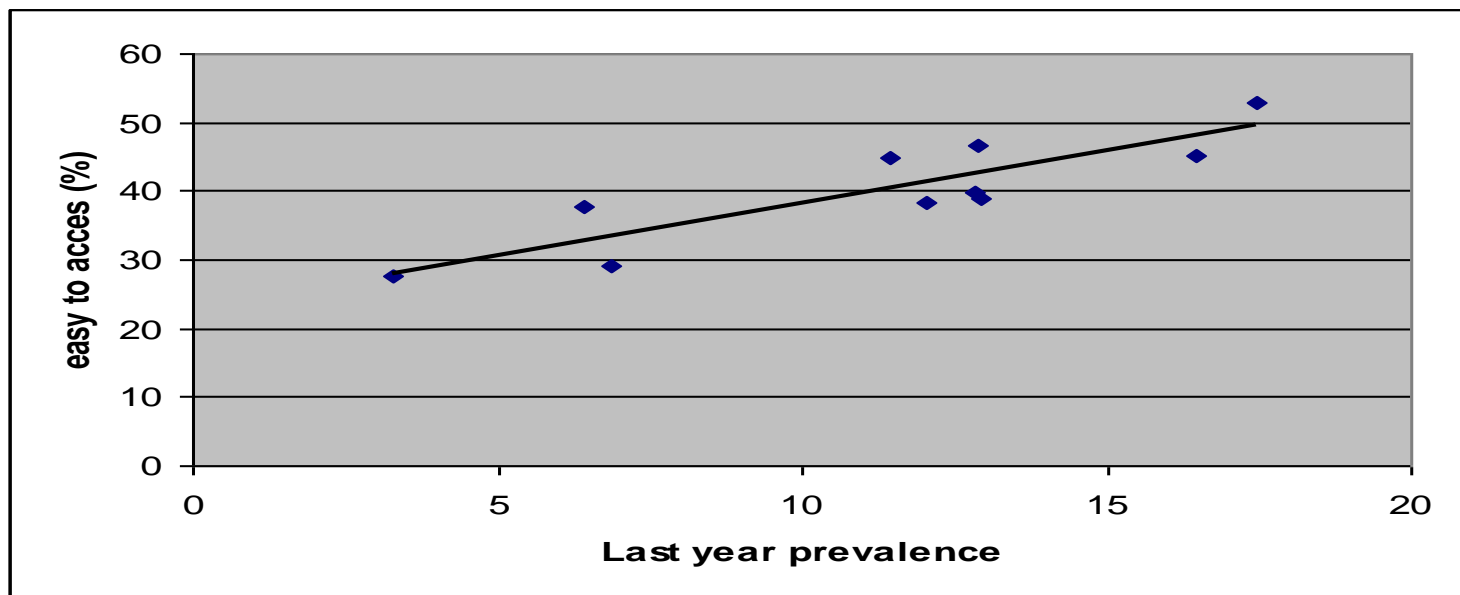
- Only about 16% of students on average indicated that marijuana was difficult to obtain (proportions ranged from 11-25%).
- A surprisingly high proportion of students in each country (average of 30%) indicated that they did not know how easy it would be to obtain marijuana.
- Not surprisingly, a larger proportion of students reporting access whether easy or difficult were in countries with higher levels of marijuana use for example Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica and St. Lucia.



EASY ACCESS VERSUS PAST YEAR PREVALENCE

The relationship between prevalence of marijuana use and access to marijuana is very clearly demonstrated in the following figure.

Hence, each point in the graph represents a country, and when a best fit line is drawn, it shows that for countries where a larger percentage of students report easy access, the past year prevalence is higher. This result is expected and it corroborates the notion that limiting access to drugs is a valid strategy in drug control.




PERCEPTION OF HARMFULNESS (MARIJUANA)

Marijuana			
Smoking Sometimes		Smoking Frequently	
Moderate	Very harmful	Moderate	Very harmful
24.5	43.3	11.4	69.3
26.5	42.9	11.9	70.2
23.9	36.3	13.3	64.5
23.1	42.6	12.4	64.3
20.5	56.3	8.8	76.2
10.2	73.5	7.8	76.5
19.6	37.9	10.5	61.1
25.1	34.1	11.0	60.9
24.9	44.6	10.1	74.5
22.8	44.6	11.8	69.5
19.7	62.7	5.7	85.4
26.1	49.6	8.4	78.7

For the most part, and except for Haiti (73.5%), Suriname (62.7%) and Guyana (56.3%), less than 50% of students in each country surveyed felt that smoking marijuana sometimes was harmful.

On the other hand, a notable high proportion (20-27%) of students felt that this was moderately harmful—Haiti was the only exception with 10.2%.



PERCEPTION OF HARMFULNESS (MARIJUANA)

- Considerable higher proportions of students felt that smoking marijuana frequently was very harmful—from about 85% of students in Suriname 61% in St Kitts and Nevis and Jamaica. In all other countries between 65-79% of students felt this was very harmful.
- *The growing perception of marijuana as a safe drug may reflect recent public discussions over “medical marijuana” and movements to legalize the drug for adult recreational use in some states.*



OUTLINE

○ Licit drug use

- Alcohol, cigarettes, inhalants and non-medical use of prescription drugs
- Prevalence, Incidence
- Age of first use
- Perception of harmfulness

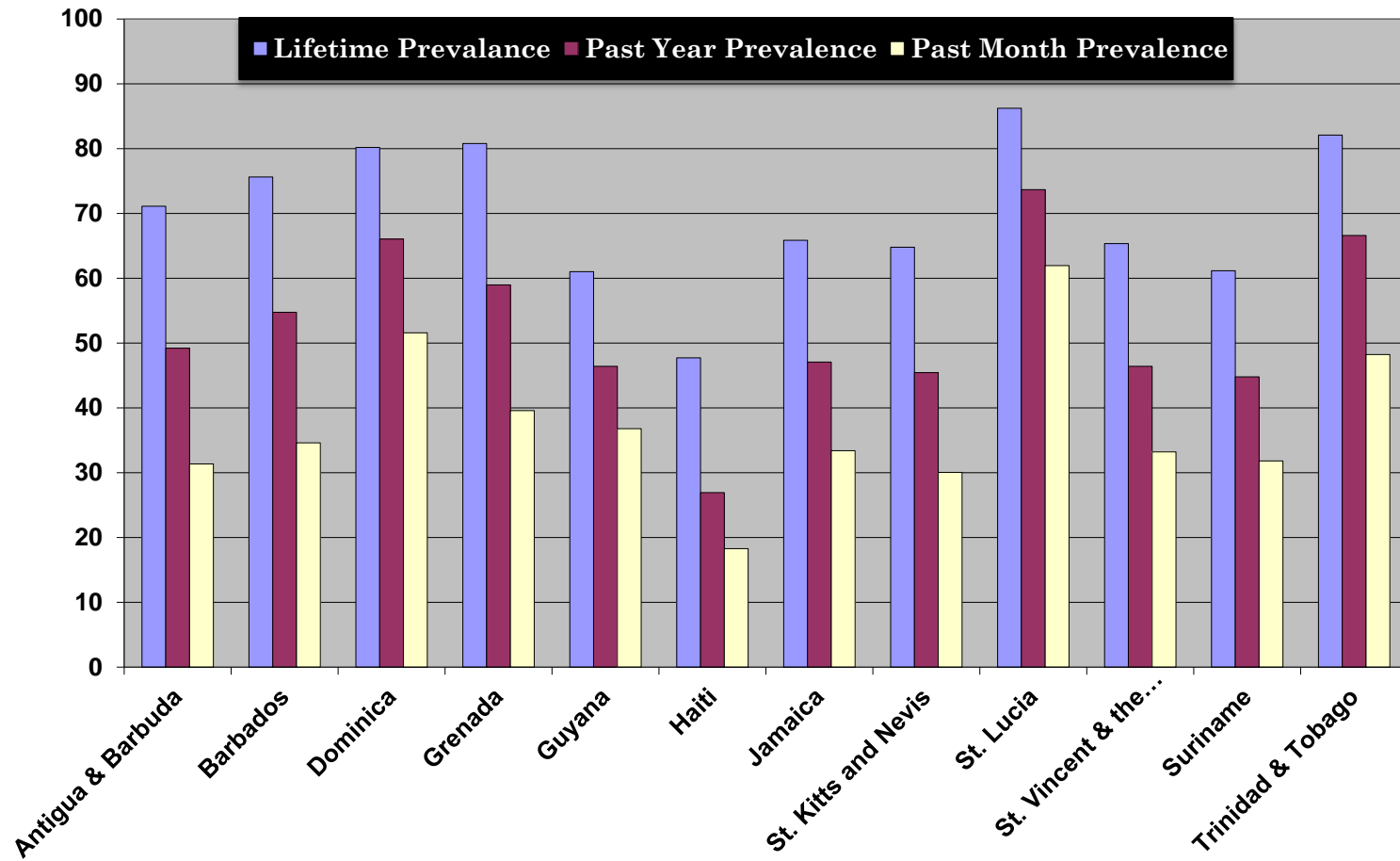


ALCOHOL USE


- Alcohol use among teens remains at historically high levels.
- The overall average lifetime prevalence was 68.9% and ranged from a low of 47.72% in Haiti to 86.20% in St Lucia.
- All other countries with the exception of Suriname, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis and St Vincent and the Grenadines reported lifetime prevalence well above the overall average (>70%).



LIFETIME, PAST YEAR AND PAST MONTH ALCOHOL PREVALENCE



INCIDENCE OF ALCOHOL USE

- In St. Lucia for example, the probability that a student consumed alcohol for the first time during the one-year period before the survey was estimated to be 67.4%, while in Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago the corresponding rates were relatively high at 59.9% and 57.8% respectively.
 - Estimated incidence rates for all other countries were below 50% and ranged from 37.41% in Suriname to 49.73% in Barbados.
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ALCOHOL USE

Country	Incidence	
	Past Year	Past Month
Antigua and Barbuda	44.72	27.56
Barbados	49.73	28.78
Dominica	59.95	42.62
Grenada	-	-
Guyana	39.47	19.34
Haiti	-	-
Jamaica	42.88	26.13
St. Kitts and Nevis	42.23	24.70
St. Lucia	67.41	51.70
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	45.23	23.38
Suriname	37.41	22.27
Trinidad and Tobago	57.89	36.51
Average	48.84	27.39

It is very interesting to note that the probability that a student in Suriname will initiate the use of alcohol during a one year period (37.41%) was almost half that of a student in St. Lucia (67.41%).


The past month incidence showed the same pattern among the countries—St Lucia, Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago reporting the highest past month incidence.

AGE OF FIRST USE - ALCOHOL


- The average age of first use of alcohol ranged from 11.0 years old in Trinidad and Tobago to 13.3 years old in Suriname.
- Most of the countries' results indicate an average age of first use of just over 11 years of age (Guyana -12.2, Haiti -13.1 and Suriname 13.3 being notable exceptions).
- The mean age of first use of alcohol across the region (for those countries reporting) was 11.7 years with a median of 12 years



WHY IS AGE OF FIRST USE OF ALCOHOL SO CRITICALLY IMPORTANT?

- Kids who start drinking alcohol before age 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol abuse or dependence than people who first used alcohol at age 21 or older.
 - A study published in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* showed that 47% of those who began drinking before age 15 experienced alcohol dependence at some point in their life, compared to 9% percent of those who began drinking at age 21 or older.
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PERCEPTION OF HARMFULNESS - ALCOHOL

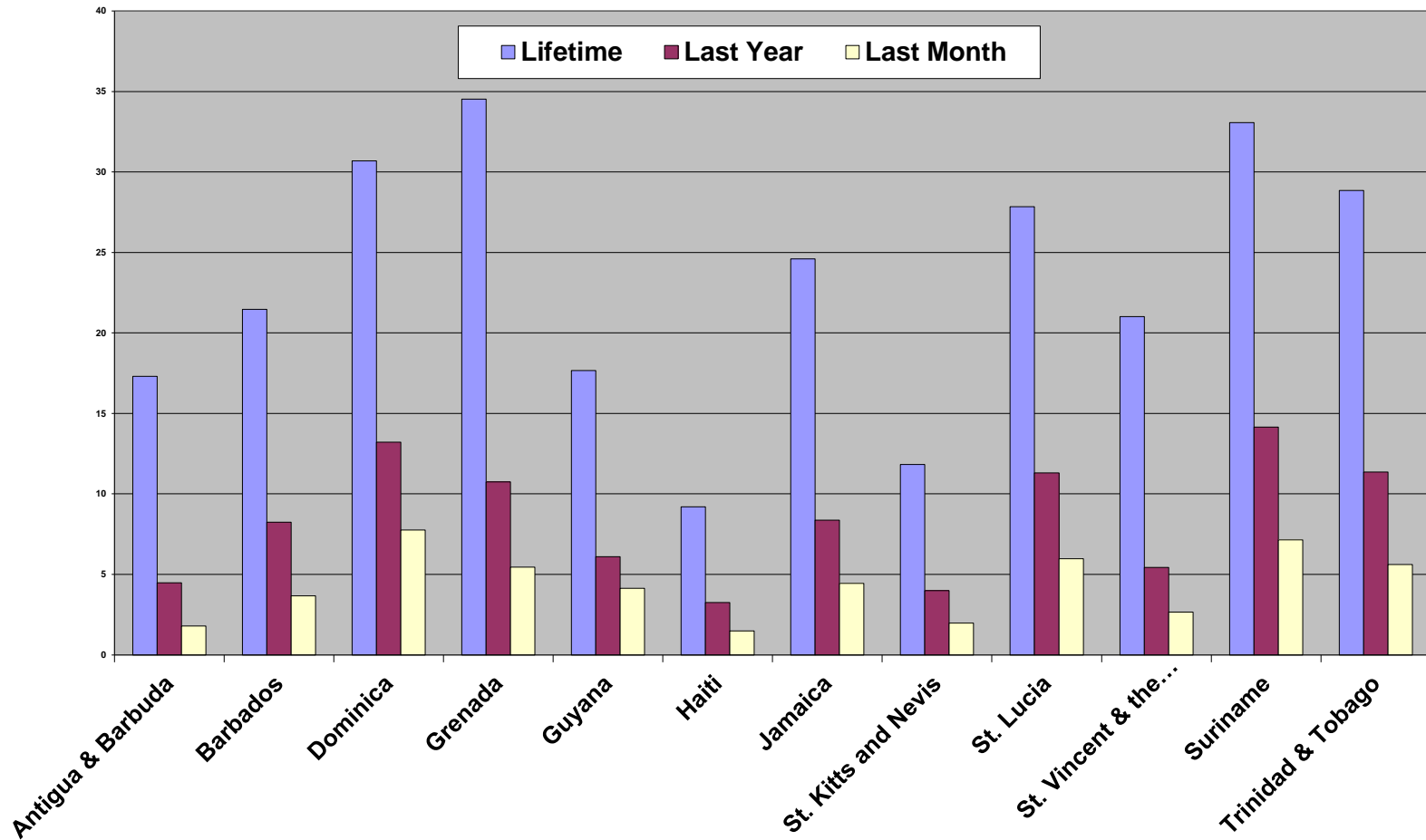
- With the exception of Haiti with a low proportion of 37.6%, and Suriname and Guyana with high proportions of 69.4% and 61.4% respectively, for all other countries some 50-60% of students indicated that drinking alcohol frequently was very harmful.
 - A notable high proportion of students in all countries felt that drinking frequently was moderately harmful.
 - More than six of every ten students in all countries felt that getting drunk was very harmful. This ranged from 62% in Jamaica to 76% in Antigua and Barbados. Grenada was the only country reporting a lower proportion (53.7%).
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CIGARETTE USE

- The lifetime prevalence rates indicate that a wide range of values were reported by the countries surveyed.
- Grenada is the country with the highest reported rate of lifetime prevalence (34.53%) along with Suriname (33.06%), Dominica (30.69%) and Trinidad and Tobago (28.86%).



CIGARETTE USE



CIGARETTE USE

- Past Year Prevalence was similarly high for Suriname (14.15%), Dominica (13.22%), Trinidad and Tobago (11.36%), and Grenada (10.75%). The overall average past year prevalence was 9.45% and most all other countries reported prevalence rates less than this with the exception of St Lucia (11.31%).
- Smoking in the past month (current users) has a relatively low prevalence among students in the 12 countries surveyed. Dominica (7.76%), Suriname (7.15%), St. Lucia (5.97%), and Grenada (5.45%) are the only countries with past month prevalence rates that are greater than 5%. The lowest prevalence was reported by Haiti (1.49%) and St Kitts and Nevis (1.98%).



INCIDENCE OF CIGARETTE USE

Country	Incidence	
	Past Year	Past Month
Antigua and Barbuda	4.00	0.97
Barbados	7.23	2.27
Dominica	10.12	3.06
Grenada	-	-
Guyana	5.06	1.79
Haiti	-	-
Jamaica	9.31	3.78
St. Kitts and Nevis	3.31	0.89
St. Lucia	10.48	3.44
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	4.96	1.36
Suriname	10.56	3.41
Trinidad and Tobago	8.05	2.47
Average	7.79	2.88

The average overall past year incidence was 7.79%. Past month incidence was relatively low among countries.

Rates ranged from a low of less than one percent in Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis to 3.79% in Jamaica.

The average overall past month incidence was 2.88%.




AGE OF FIRST USE OF CIGARETTE

- Most students initiate cigarette use between 10 and 12 years of age. Haiti and Suriname have a slightly higher average age of first use which falls around 13 years old.
- The average age of first use of cigarettes ranged from 10.7 years old in Grenada to 13.4 years old in Haiti.
- Most of the countries' results indicates an average age of first use of just over 11 years of age (with only Haiti and Suriname being notable exceptions).
- The mean age of first use of cigarette across the region (for those countries reporting) was 11.92 years with a median of 12 years



PERCEPTION OF HARMFULNESS - CIGARETTE

- For the most part, and except for Grenada (66.5%), less than 50% of students in each country surveyed felt that smoking cigarettes sometimes was harmful.
 - On the other hand, 14-29% of students felt that this was moderately harmful.
 - Considerable higher proportions of students felt that smoking cigarettes frequently was very harmful—from about 82% of students in Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago and St Lucia to 59% in Haiti.
 - In all other countries between 70-77% of students felt this was very harmful.
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NONMEDICAL USE OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

- Nonmedical use of prescription and over-the-counter medicines remains a significant part of the teen drug problem.
- Tranquilizers - Suriname (9.1%) is the only country besides Haiti with a past year prevalence rate greater than 5%.
- Stimulants - Haiti has the highest reported prevalence by far with lifetime and past year and past month prevalence rates of 20.3% 9.5% and 6.14% respectively. All other countries report past year prevalence rates of less than 5% and even lower past month rates of less than 3%.



CONCLUDING

- The findings from this survey can be used to inform policies, programmes and future campaigns, and will help to identify important opportunities to create awareness and promote prevention of substance use among youth.
- The survey results provide valuable insights into the behaviour of youth, and although there are some encouraging low prevalence and incidence in some countries, it is imperative that we work with parents, schools and students, in particular, to create awareness of the pitfalls of substance use

