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# Monitoring Recent Changes of Cross-border Drug Use and their Implications for Prevention/Control Strategies

RESEARCH BRIEFING



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# Research Background 1: Cross-border drug use as emerging social problem

- ▶ Increased cross border drug use upon continual economic and social integration of the Pearl River Delta area:
  - ▶ Local research has **focused mainly on cross border drug-taking behavior of the younger ages** (Cheung, Lee and Tang 2001).
  - ▶ Most was **conducted in earlier years** (e.g. Lau 2003).
- ▶ What happened to cross border drug use in recent years?
  - ❖ To **investigate the current situation and patterns** of cross-border drug activities among Hong Kong citizens.
    - ▶ E.g. Cross border drug use among other age group?
  - ❖ To **explore any social changes or policy shifts** that might affect the cross-border drug use.
    - ▶ CRDA : place of drug abuse in Mainland has been dropping.

# Research Background 2: Serious concern of cross-border drug use by law enforcements

- ▶ Hong Kong Police Force/Custom – “Dangerous drug” continues to be one of the operational priorities in 2015.
  - ▶ Narcotic Divisions – on drug trafficking and intelligence
  - ▶ Border District – special effort in preventing cross-border drug use
- ▶ Guangdong Narcotics Bureau (廣東省禁毒局) Annual Report (published June 24th, 2015)
  - ▶ The Bureau has paid special attention to cross-border drug use.
  - ▶ Arrested a total of 464 Hong Kong / Macau drug users within 17 months (2015).
- ❖ What has been done to curb cross border drug use?
- ❖ How did drug users perceive the law enforcement efforts?

# Theoretical background (1): Deterrence Theory 威懾理論

- ▶ Focus on deterrence effect of the criminal justice system on cross border drug use.
- ▶ Crackdown on youths' cross-border drug activities has stepped up following concern expressed by the former Chief Executive Donald Tsang in 2008 (Lo 2011).
- ▶ Mainland responses included: temporary detention of Hong Kong residents who were detected for taking drugs, stepped up patrol in discos and clubs that were drug hotspots, and continual cooperation with Hong Kong law enforcement agencies for intelligence sharing and strategic operations.
- ❖ ***What are the impacts of these deterrence action over the pattern of cross-border drug consumption?***

# Theoretical background (2)

## Life Course Theory 生命歷程理論

- ▶ A substantial number of young drug abusers will cease to take drugs in later part of their life course, especially after entering into young adulthood (Dewit, Offord & Wong 1997).
- ▶ To sustain a drug habit one might need to adjust cross-border drug consumption patterns in accordance with changes in life-course (work etc.).
- ❖ ***What happens to those young adult drug abusers graduating from the 2000s drug epidemic?***
- ❖ ***What are the characteristics of those aging drug users that continue drug use in Mainland? How does network and occupation impact on the flexibilities and opportunities of cross border drug use?***

# Theoretical background (3): Normalization Thesis 規範化理論

- ▶ A normalization of recreational drug use has occurred in the west (Parker et al. 1998; Parker 2005). It is related to the emergence of risk society.
  - ▶ Social accommodation; calculative use; easier access ...
- ▶ Prior research has tested the 'normalization thesis' in Hong Kong and among youths only (Cheung and Cheung 2006). Result suggested insufficient support to indicate a normalization.
- ❖ **How about cross-border drug use activities? Is there a 'normalization' taking place? Using the most updated data from stakeholders, we investigate if HK is consistent with the global situation?**

# Methodology:

## First stage of the project

### In-depth Interviews

- ▶ **33 officers** from law enforcement departments: 7 HK police officers, 7 HK C&E officers, 12 Mainland police officers, and 7 Shenzhen Custom officers.
- ▶ **30 drugs users** (two aged <18, fourteen aged 18-25, fourteen aged >25) and **8 social workers**, from local NGOs:
  - ❖ Sister Aquinas Memorial Women's Treatment Centre, SARDA (香港戒毒會 區貴雅修女紀念婦女康復中心)
  - ❖ Hong Kong Children and Youth Services - Sane Centre (香港青少年服務處 心弦成長中心)
  - ❖ Church Social Service, Hong Kong (北區青少年外展社會工作隊)
  - ❖ Au Tau Youth Centre, SARDA (香港戒毒會 凹頭青少年中心)
  - ❖ Cheer Lutheran Centre, HKLSS (Counselling Centre for Psychotropic Substance Abusers) (香港路德會社會服務處 路德會青欣中心)
  - ❖ Adult Female Rehabilitation Centre, SARDA (香港戒毒會 成年婦女康復中心)
  - ❖ North District Youth Outreaching Social Work Team, Evangelical Lutheran

# Methodology:

## Second stage of the project

**To explore basic changing patterns of cross-border drug use with existing data:**

- ▶ Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA): Established in 1972, provides relevant drug abuse statistics for monitoring changes in drug abuse trends and characteristics of drug abusers.
- ▶ 2008/09 & 2011/12 Survey of Drug Use among Students: To collect information on the taking of alcohol, tobacco and drugs amongst adolescents, seven large-scale surveys targeting students were conducted during the period of 1987/88 to 2008/09.
- ▶ The 'patterns' help to generate some research ideas – e.g. what to ask?



# Methodology:

## Second stage of the project

### To conduct a large-scale survey at the borders crossings between Hong Kong and Shenzhen:

- Self-report survey conducted at Lo Wu, Lok Ma Chau (spur line), Lo Ma Chau, and Shenzhen Bay crossings (four total).
- Target: cross-border travelers who are Hong Kong citizens 18-50.
- **Non-probability** Sampling: convenience sampling, quota sampling and purposive sampling are combined to include different subgroups of the cross-border respondents and maximize reach to potential drug users.
- Sensitive questions are kept to the end of the questionnaire so as to minimize the risk of break-offs; anonymity and confidentiality is assured by self-administering the survey.
- Total interviewed: **1,461** (after excluding invalid questionnaires), among them **81 drug users** are spotted.
- Triangulation: to assess the findings of the qualitative research part.

# Questionnaire Content

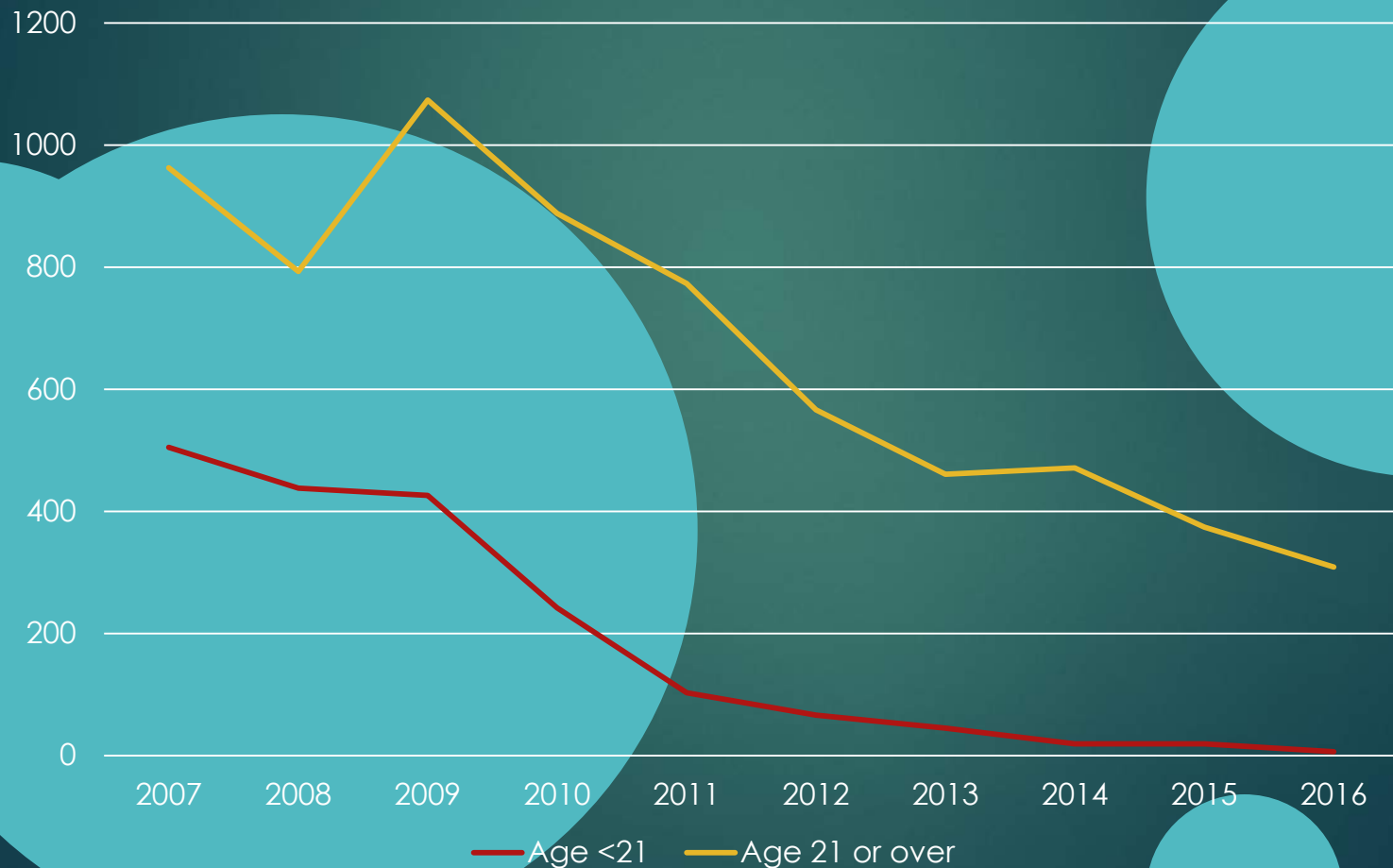
## Part I

- *Section One: Basic Sociodemographic Information*
- *Section Two: Cross-border Patterns*
- *Section Three: Knowledge about anti-drug policies and attitudes toward drug use*

## Part II: Drug use behaviors in Mainland and Hong Kong

- Drug use behaviors of respondents.
- Drug use behaviors of someone respondents frequently associated with.

# Place of abusing drug = Mainland China (no.) (CRDA)



# Student Surveys

- ▶ 2008/09 & 2011/12 Survey among drug use students)
- ▶ The proportion of taking-drug places among cross-border drug-taking students (multiple selection allowed):

	<b>Mainland &amp; Macau</b>	<b>Macau</b>	<b>Shen zhen</b>	<b>Dong guan</b>	<b>Guang zhou</b>	<b>Overseas</b>
2008/09 Survey	33.0%		54.5%	20.8%	35.8%	
2011/12 Survey	63.9%	19.2%	35.1%			40.3%

# Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative findings: Current drug use

## Heroin

- ▶ Declining with aging user population
- ▶ Unpopular among youngsters
- ▶ Less than 10% of the drugs users interviewed tried heroin
- ▶ A few drugs users (<3) interviewed admitted cross-border heroin use
  - ▶ Usually brought their own heroin across the border to consume in mainland, because they were not familiar with local heroin supply.
- ▶ Matches with the result of CRDA statistics

# Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative findings: Current drug use

## Ketamine

- ▶ The most popular drug among the drug users interviewed
  - ▶ Most drug users also reflected some knowledge towards its harmful effect
- ▶ Majority (>90%) of the drug users interviewed tried ketamine
- ▶ Convenience is a major factor contributing to its popularity: No specific tools required, easy to take while working and driving.
- ▶ Some law enforcement officers estimated: over 95% of ketamine in HK were trafficked from the Mainland.

# Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative findings: Current drug use

## Ketamine

- ▶ Most of the drug users admitted having cross-border ketamine use before.
- ▶ Some stated their reduced cross-border drug use in recent years due to raids by the Mainland Police.
- ▶ Some expressed their preference to use the drug within Hong Kong (at home, upstairs pub or private club house, etc.) now.

# Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative findings: Current drug use

## Methamphetamine

- ▶ Popular drugs among Hong Kong drug users
- ▶ Most drug users interviewed tried methamphetamine, some with cross-border drug use experience.
- ▶ Easy to obtain tools and seldom get arrested.
- ▶ **Fancy tools are used** (e.g. grape fruit juice, LED flash light, etc.)
- ▶ Law enforcement agents opined that amount of ketamine and methamphetamine found by the Police increased during recent years.



# Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative findings: Current drug use

## Cocaine:

- ▶ Previously Less prominent than the ketamine and methamphetamine in Hong Kong.
- ▶ Becoming more popular recently due to the increase in supply and its dropping in price.
- ▶ Several (nearly 30%) drug users interviewed have tried cocaine before.

# Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative findings: Current drug use

## Drug related offences

According to the Police record,

- ▶ Drug related crimes peaked at 2008 (8,878 persons arrested)
- ▶ Drug related offences has continuously dropped afterwards.
- ▶ 4,432 persons arrested in 2014.
- ▶ Same declining trend in both the youngsters aged below 21 and 21 and over.
- ▶ Yet, as arrest number drops, amount of drugs (esp. synthetic drugs) discovered increases.

# Table 35. Types of drug use among the identified drug users in this survey

Types of drug	Drug use HK		Drug use Mainland	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Marijuana (大麻)	38	64.4%	23	47.9%
Heroin(白粉)	10	16.9%	7	14.6%
Ecstasy (Methylenedioxy-ethamphetamine) (摇头丸)	16	27.1%	13	27.1%
Ketamine(K仔)	17	28.8%	23	47.9%
Ice(冰)	12	20.3%	10	20.8%
Methaqualone (忽得)	5	8.5%	3	6.3%
'Give me five' (Nimetazepam(Erimin)) (五仔)	12	20.3%	6	12.5%
'Blue Gremlin' (Triazolam(Halcion) / Midazolam(Dormicum) (藍精靈)	4	6.8%	7	14.6%
Zopiclone (白瓜子)	2	3.4%	2	4.2%
Cocaine (可卡因)	16	27.1%	12	25.0%
Other drugs	4	6.8%	6	12.5%
Total	N=59		N=48	

# Summary of the Findings: Cross-Border Drug users' characteristics

- ▶ Gender ratio: around 5 (male):1 (female)
- ▶ Age: more diversified, less youth
- ▶ Lower education level
- ▶ Prestige of Occupation is also low; flexible job arrangement.
- ▶ Include both new migrants (after 1997) and old migrants.

# Table 4 Percentage of prior drug use experience by age

age	Drug use in HK only		Drug use in Mainland only		Drug use in both places		Total		Drug use in either place	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>18-21</b>	5	2.5%	5	2.5%	9	4.4%	204	100%	19	9.3%
<b>22-25</b>	10	3.4%	4	1.3%	8	2.7%	298	100%	22	7.4%
<b>26-30</b>	3	1.3%	3	1.3%	3	1.3%	238	100%	9	3.8%
<b>31-40</b>	7	1.8%	5	1.3%	6	1.5%	395	100%	18	4.6%
<b>41-50</b>	5	1.6%	2	0.7%	6	2.0%	306	100%	13	4.2%
<b>Total</b>	30	2.1%	19	1.3%	32	2.2%	1441	100%	81	5.6%



# Table 6 The education background of interviewees versus drug use

education background	No drug use		Drug use in HK only		Drug use in Mainland only		Drug use in both places		Total		Drug use in either place	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No formal education or kindergarten	5	0.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.1%	6	0.4%	1	1.3%
Primary school	16	1.2%	0	0.0%	1	5.6%	3	9.4%	20	1.4%	4	5.0%
<b>Secondary 1 to 3</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>38.9%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30.0%</b>
<b>Secondary 4 to 5</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>30.0%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22.2%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>30.7%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36.3%</b>
Pre-med	150	11.1%	2	6.7%	1	5.6%	0	0.0%	153	10.6%	3	3.8%
Junior College: a bachelor's degree (e.g. associate degree, Diploma)	223	16.4%	1	3.3%	4	22.2%	4	12.5%	232	16.1%	9	11.3%
University: Bachelor's degree	275	20.3%	6	20.0%	1	5.6%	1	3.1%	283	19.7%	8	10.0%
University: Master or PhD	98	7.2%	1	3.3%	0	0.0%	1	3.1%	100	7.0%	2	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1357</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1437</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Table 8 Occupation of interviewees:

Working background	No drug use		Drug use in HK only		Drug use in Mainland only		Drug use in both places		Total		Drug use in either place	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Banking and Finance	162	13.1%	3	10.3%	3	16.7%	5	17.9%	173	13.2%	11	14.7%
construction	141	11.4%	4	13.8%	3	16.7%	4	14.3%	152	11.6%	11	14.7%
Education	52	4.2%	0	0.0%	1	5.6%	1	3.6%	54	4.1%	2	2.7%
hotel and catering	163	13.2%	3	10.3%	2	11.1%	6	21.4%	174	13.3%	11	14.7%
Manufacturing industry	68	5.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	7.1%	70	5.3%	2	2.7%
health care	36	2.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	36	2.7%	0	0.0%
Public administration service / Government	37	3.0%	1	3.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	38	2.9%	1	1.3%
Property	32	2.6%	0	0.0%	1	5.6%	0	0.0%	33	2.5%	1	1.3%
retailing / trade	146	11.8%	4	13.8%	3	16.7%	1	3.6%	154	11.7%	8	10.7%
Entertainment / Kangle / activities	14	1.1%	1	3.4%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	16	1.2%	2	2.7%
Service industry	140	11.3%	2	6.9%	0	0.0%	4	14.3%	146	11.1%	6	8.0%
transportation / logistics / communication service	145	11.7%	7	24.1%	4	22.2%	3	10.7%	159	12.1%	14	18.7%
Other business activities	19	1.5%	1	3.4%	1	5.6%	1	3.6%	22	1.7%	3	4.0%
Others	82	6.6%	3	10.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	85	6.5%	3	4.0%
Total	1237	1	29	1	18	1	28	1	1312	1	75	1

# Table 10 Marital status of interviewee: no drug use versus drug use

Marital Status	No drug use		Drug use in HK only		Drug use in Mainland only		Drug use in both places		Total		Drug use in either place	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
single	784	57.9%	23	76.7%	12	63.2%	21	65.6%	840	58.5%	56	69.1%
Married	469	34.6%	6	20.0%	4	21.1%	7	21.9%	486	33.9%	17	21.0%
divorce	55	4.1%	1	3.3%	1	5.3%	3	9.4%	60	4.2%	5	6.2%
Widowed	4	0.3%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	5	0.3%	1	1.2%
Cohabitation	31	2.3%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	1	3.1%	33	2.3%	2	2.5%
remarriage	6	0.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	0.4%	0	0.0%
Others	5	0.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	0.3%	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	1354	100%	30	100%	19	100%	32	100%	1435	100.0%	81	100%





# Summary of findings: Harsher Law Enforcement and More Educational Measures

## In Hong Kong

- ▶ Some HK police officers estimated harsher punishment after 2008 may result in the drop in arrest number.
- ▶ Starting from the end of July 2014, the Police would transfer the serious drug trafficking cases committed by youngsters aged between 10 and 17 to Regional Crime Unit for further investigation.
- ▶ Heavier penalty in the court if a minor is recruited to trafficking drugs.
- ▶ More collaborations with Mainland Police and Custom.
- ▶ “Operation EDGETELLER” was organized by the Hong Kong Border Police and a local NGO from 2008 to 2014.
  - ▶ A survey targeting the travelers at the land borders and 19,224 travelers were approached. 6.3% (1,205 travelers) completed the questionnaire. Project ended in June 2014 due to the decline in the number of cross-border drug users.
- ▶ Anti-Drug Video Clips and Posters at the borders.

# Summary of findings: Harsher Law Enforcement and More Educational Measures

## In Mainland China

- ▶ More frequent patrols in hotspots.
- ▶ Stricter policies to control entertainment premises.
- ▶ Compulsory urine tests.
- ▶ More advanced technology to locate drug users.
- ▶ The standardized protocol in dealing with HK cross-border drug users by Shenzhen police: detention outcome.
- ▶ More collaborations with HK law enforcement agencies.
- ▶ But lack of educational measures and rehabilitation programs for HK drug users.

# Table 14 Interviewees' awareness of anti-narcotic propaganda at control points: no drug use versus drug use

Awareness of anti-narcotic propaganda	No drug use			Drug use in HK only			Drug use in Mainland only			Drug use in both places			Drug use in either place		
	N	% yes	Sub _t	N	% yes	Sub _t	N	% yes	Sub _t	N	% yes	Sub _t	N	% yes	Sub _t
Anti-drug signs	111 3	81.7 %	136 3	25	<b>83.3</b> %	30	14	<b>73.7</b> %	19	24	75.0 %	32	63	77.8 %	81
Anti-drug videos	758	56.3 %	134 7	19	<b>63.3</b> %	30	11	61.1 %	18	18	<b>56.3</b> %	32	48	60.0 %	80
Anti-narcotic inspection dogs	118 6	<b>87.2</b> %	136 0	27	<b>90.0</b> %	30	15	78.9 %	19	25	<b>78.1</b> %	32	67	82.7 %	81

Information least effective to those that took drug in BOTH places?

# Table 16 Interviewees' awareness of the three types of punishment for taking drugs in Mainland China

Awareness of punishment	1. no drug use		2. only HK drug use		3. only mainland drug use		4. both borders drug use		Total		Drug use in HK or mainland (2+3+4)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Detention because of taking drug in Mainland	1231	90.4%	24	80.0%	17	94.4%	24	77.4%	1296	89.9%	65	82.3%
Being sent to drug center because of taking drug in Mainland	936	68.8%	20	66.7%	17	94.4%	14	45.2%	987	68.6%	51	64.6%
drug record being registered in an electronic system because of taking drug in Mainland	807	59.1%	17	56.7%	16	88.9%	19	61.3%	859	59.8%	52	65.8%

Differentiation in receiving information – what's the implication? Three groups, not just two groups, of drug users?

# Analysis and discussions: Four points

## 1. Decreasing young cross-border drug users

- ▶ Economic reason – strong RMB in recent years, drug users mentioned about ‘cost’ of consumption.
  - ▶ From drug users interviews, drug use seems to associated with other high or low risk cross border activities (e.g. prostitution)
- ▶ Effective deterrence and prevention
  - ▶ Changing atmosphere and environment.
- ▶ Social capital plays a significant role
  - ▶ Most were ‘initiated’ in ‘socializing’ environment with friends; boyfriends.
  - ▶ Also source of deterrence: mentioned about the shift from ecstasy (some one went nuts); jail experience.

# Analysis and discussions

## 2. Increasing adult cross-border drug users

- ▶ Reflected in Mainland data.
- ▶ Adults tend to have more social and economic capital to adjust to social and environmental change.
- ▶ Higher chance of falling out of the radar of the local HK NGOs and HK law enforcement (despite being caught in Mainland).
- ▶ Might have persisting pattern of crossing the border and traveling farther for drug use since adolescence.
  - ▶ Migrants' personal network and drug use pattern?

# Analysis and discussions

## **3. Normalization of Recreational Drug Use (Psychotropic Drugs)**

- ▶ Knowledge of sensible drug use demonstrated by users.
- ▶ Psychotropic drugs are (once) easy to obtain and the price is affordable.
- ▶ Psychotropic drug use has expanded to a larger population - for recreational purposes and at certain social contexts.

## **4. Expanding transnational drug trafficking**

- ▶ South America drug syndicates try to expand business and seem to target Asia market.
- ▶ Canton has become a “world factory” of psychotropic drugs.

# Policy Suggestions

- ▶ **Synchronized actions and cooperative cross-border drug policies (e.g. before and after 2008)**
- ▶ **Drug policy should target cross-border drug use as one element among hybridized patterns of cross-border risk behaviors.**
- ▶ **Heterogeneous nature of cross-border drug users and cultural sensitivity in cross-border drug prevention policies.**



# THANK YOU!

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