

A Multilevel Analysis of the Demography of Drug Abuse in Hong Kong (BDF170062)

Executive Summary

Drug abuse harms the society in multiple ways, and is a growing concern worldwide. This study explores the historical and latest changes in drug abuse in Hong Kong. We introduce the demography of drug abuse to take into account the demographic changes for comparison across sub-populations over time. Socioeconomic and demographic factors associated with drug abuse are then examined using multiple linear regression models. Based on the findings, we further dig into the studies on drug abuse in other regions for policy reference.

Specifically, significant changes in both the number and rate of drug abuse by drug type, age, gender, ethnicity, district, education and economic activity from 1991 to 2016 are documented. Although narcotics analgesics are more common, stimulants and ketamine are growing popular in Hong Kong, especially among the youth. The number of elderly drug abusers is increasing due to the ageing population, whereas the rate of elderly drug abuse is actually stable or decreasing. In contrast, drug abuse rate is increasing for the middle-aged and for groups with lower education. The highest rate of drug use is observed for people aged between 20 and 30, as well as for those with primary education. Compared with males, the female drug use rate is 15 or 46 people per 10,000 lower for the newly or previously addicted cases. A 10% increase in average monthly income is associated with a 14% drop in drug use rate at the district level. The average annual expenditure on drug use is USD 32.6 million in Hong Kong. These estimates show that demographic and socioeconomic characteristics are important predictors of illicit drug use. The research findings of this report support social policy design to curb drug abuse, which shall pay more attention to at-risk groups mentioned in this research and shall consider more financial support to lower the drug use rates.

The report proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 describes the demography of drug abuse in Hong Kong. Chapter 2 probes the determinants of drug abuse. Chapter 3 provides a multi-regional comparison of drug abuse situation and policy by reviewing previous studies. Chapter 4 concludes.

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