



NATIONAL COUNCIL  
AGAINST DRUG ABUSE

## NCADA NEWS RELEASE

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### **YOUTHS DISPLAY MORE LIBERAL VIEWS TOWARDS DRUGS; PARENTAL INFLUENCE KEY IN DETERRING DRUG ABUSE**

Compared to 2013, youths today are displaying a more liberal attitude towards drugs, especially cannabis, according to the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) Perception Survey 2015 / 2016. This survey was conducted from 2015 to 2016, and builds on the results from the 2013 NCADA Youth Perception Survey. While the scope of the 2013 survey covered youths from 13 to 21 years old, the latest survey expanded its focus to include youths up to age 30. In addition, a Public Perception Survey was also conducted with members of public aged 31 to 60 years old to complement the findings of the youth perception survey. In total, 2,748 youths, aged 13 to 30 years old, and 1,212 members of public, aged 31 to 60 years old, were surveyed. The survey also included in-depth interviews with youths, to better understand youths' perceptions towards drugs.

#### **Strong Support for Singapore's drug-free approach and laws**

2. Overall, 81% of total survey respondents held a negative view towards drugs. Over 50% of respondents associated drugs with intrinsic harms, such as "affecting one's body and mind" or being "addictive". A significant majority were supportive of Singapore's drug-free approach, with at least 89% of respondents indicating that Singapore's drug laws were effective in keeping the drug situation under control, and over 75% supporting Singapore's zero tolerance stance against drugs.

#### **More liberal attitudes towards drugs amongst youths**

3. Whilst the majority of youths still hold a negative view towards drugs, there was an increase in the proportion of younger youths aged 13 to 21 who take a liberal view towards drugs, from about 11% in 2013 to 16% in 2016.<sup>1</sup> This meant that more youths agreed with liberal attitudinal statements such as "It is alright to try drugs for a new experience" and "I do not mind trying drugs when I am overseas".

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<sup>1</sup> Youths' attitudes towards drugs were measured through the extent of their agreement towards a set of 21 attitudinal statements about drugs, such as "I would try taking drugs if it was not illegal".

4. Older youth segments displayed more liberal attitudes towards drugs, as compared to younger youths.<sup>2</sup> However, 94% of all youths surveyed were confident in their ability to resist peer pressure and to say no to drugs. In-depth interviews revealed that youths' knowledge of the legal repercussions of drug abuse was the key deterrent against drug abuse. 58% of youths cited social media as their source of information for drug-related content, and about 55% indicated that they received drug-related content from websites.

#### **One-third of youths surveyed do not perceive cannabis as addictive**

5. Youths also held misperceptions about cannabis, with over 33% of youths perceiving it to be less harmful or non-addictive. Their misperceptions were largely perpetuated by various online sources alleging that cannabis had medicinal uses and should, therefore, be legalised. Some youths also felt that if drugs were legalised, the abuse of drugs such as cannabis would increase as they were seen as less harmful.

#### **Parental influence is key in deterring drug abuse**

6. Parental influence was found to be effective in preventing drug abuse. Close to 50% of secondary school and junior college respondents had conversations with their parents about drugs, and over 92% who did so were deterred from abusing drugs. This is a key protective factor against drug abuse, especially with youth drug abuse continuing to be a trend of concern. However, less than half of the respondents have had such conversations with their parents. One of the students surveyed, 13-year-old Kelly (*not her real name*), said that she was able to better understand the harms of drugs after her parents spoke to her about it.

7. With the social media's popularisation of softer global attitudes towards drugs, there is a danger that youths could be more inclined towards a more liberal view of drugs over time. If left unchecked, these youths could form the next generation of drug abusers. Chairman NCADA Mr Hawazi Daipi said "While many parents may understand the importance of staying drug-free, it may not be a priority for them to talk to their children about this. However, with youths having misconceptions and exhibiting more liberal attitudes towards drugs, it is important for them to start talking to their children before they succumb to the temptation of taking drugs. NCADA has enlisted youths to serve as anti-drug advocates, to share the importance of a drug-free lifestyle and tips on how to refuse drugs. CNB has also produced a new parents' handbook to help parents broach the issue with their children. This is available on CNB's website

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<sup>2</sup> Older youth segments include NSFs, university students and young working adults. Younger youth groups surveyed included those from secondary school, junior colleges, polytechnics, ITEs and out-of-school youths.

<http://www.cnb.gov.sg/parentshandbook.aspx>. We hope that the survey results serve as a timely reminder for parents to speak to their children about this important issue.”



[from left to right] Secretary NCADA, Mr Sng Chern Hong, Chairperson of the Perception Survey Sub-Committee Dr Ganapathy, Chairman NCADA Mr Hawazi Daipi, Vice-Chairman NCADA Mr Chew Tuan Chiong, along with Mr Zhulkarnian and Anti-drug advocate Mr Fong Kim Wah



Chairman NCADA Mr Hawazi Daipi speaking during the press conference for the release of the NCADA Perception Survey 2015/2016 results

## **KEY FINDINGS: NATIONAL COUNCIL AGAINST DRUG ABUSE (NCADA) PERCEPTION SURVEY 2015/2016**

In 2015, the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) commissioned the Perception Survey 2015/2016 to examine the following:

- (a) Youth's perceptions of and attitudes towards drug taking and CNB's anti-drug campaigns and exhibitions;
- (b) Youth's perceptions of and support towards Singapore's tough drug laws and policies;
- (c) Youth's knowledge of drug abuse and their sources of information

### **Methodology**

2. There were two components to the Perception Survey:
  - (a) Component 1 – Quantitative survey with 2,748 youths (aged 13 to 30) and 1,212 members of public (31 to 60 years old); and
  - (b) Component 2 – Qualitative paired in-depth interviews with 48 youths.<sup>3</sup>
3. A total of 3,960 people aged 13 to 60 years old were surveyed, using a representative sampling of Singapore's population.
4. Attitudes towards drugs were measured through the extent to which the respondents agreed with attitudinal statements about drugs.

### **Key Findings**

#### **1. There is strong support for Singapore's drug-free approach and laws**

- At least 89% of youths felt that Singapore's drug laws were effective in keeping the drug situation under control, and over 75% of youths were supportive of Singapore's drug-free approach. This represents continued strong support for Singapore's drug-free approach.
- The majority of survey respondents was found to hold negative views towards drugs. This was consistent across genders, ethnic groups, education and income levels.

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<sup>3</sup> The NCADA 2015/2016 Youth and Public Perception Survey was expanded to cover respondents from 21 to 60 years old, expanding from the 2013 NCADA Youth Perception Survey, which studied only youths from 13 to 21 years old.

Overall, 81% of total respondents interviewed perceived drugs negatively, with over 50% associating drugs with intrinsic harms such as “affecting one’s body and mind” or “addiction”.

## **2. More liberal attitudes towards drugs amongst youths**

- Youths were found to hold negative attitudes towards drugs, and a majority continued to disagree with liberal attitudinal statements such as “I would try taking drugs if it was not illegal”.
- However, there was an increase in liberal views about drugs among those aged 13 to 21, from 11% in the 2013 survey to 16% in the latest survey. More youths in this age group agreed with liberal statements such as “It is alright to try drugs for a new experience”.
- Older youth segments<sup>4</sup> also tended to agree more with liberal statements such as “It is alright to try drugs for a new experience” and “I do not mind trying drugs when I am overseas”.
- Nevertheless, at least 94% of all youths (under 30 years old) were confident in their ability to resist peer pressure and to say no to drugs. The key deterrent for them was the anti-drug laws.
- Majority of the youths formed their perceptions about drug-related matters through indirect sources such as mainstream and social media.

## **3. More youths perceive cannabis to be less harmful and not addictive**

- Over 33% of youths felt that cannabis was not addictive, and this misperception was largely perpetuated by various online sources, which propagated misinformation that cannabis had medicinal uses and should therefore be legalised. 35% of youths also perceived cannabis as a popular drug in Singapore, up from 17% in 2013.
- Some respondents said that if drugs were made legal, there would be an increase in the abuse of drugs such as cannabis

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<sup>4</sup> Older youth segments include NSFs, university students and young working adults. Younger youth groups surveyed included those from secondary school, junior colleges, polytechnics, ITEs and out-of-school youths.

#### **4. Parental influence is key in deterring drug abuse**

- Parental influence was found to be effective in deterring drug abuse. Almost half of the secondary school and junior college respondents were found to have had conversations with their parents about drugs, and 9 in 10 were less likely to abuse drugs after talking to their parents about it.