

HIGH PREVALENCE OF SMOKING AMONG IN-SCHOOL JAMAICAN YOUTH

According to the World Health Organization’s (WHO) report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2008, the vast majority of smokers begin using tobacco products well before the age of 18 years. It is predicted that if this pattern continues, a lifetime of tobacco use would result in the death of 250 million children and young people alive today, most of them in developing countries.

Jamaica’s National School Survey 2006 revealed that the average age of initiation to smoking is 12 years old. The lifetime prevalence of smoking stood at cigarettes (27%), marijuana (24%) and beady/bidis (14%).

The survey also found association between drug use and behavioral problems. Frequent disciplinary problems are link to smokers of cigarette (48%), marijuana (47%) and beady/bidis (32%).

Data coming out of the Treatment and Rehabilitation Centers indicated that for the period 2004 to 2007, nineteen percent (19%) between the ages 11 and 18 years entered treatment for marijuana abuse, one percent (1%) for crack/cocaine abuse while 0.2% and 0.1% sought treatment for tobacco and seasoned spliff use respectfully.

The National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA) continues its efforts to gather data and monitor all aspects of the substance abuse problem providing information, encouraging rehabilitation and promoting healthy lifestyle options to the Jamaican people.

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Prevalence of Substance Abuse among the grade 8, 10 and 11 students
 National School Survey 2006

	Lifetime prevalence	One year prevalence	One month prevalence (current use)
Cigarettes	27	10	5
Beady/Bidis	14	7	4
Marijuana	24	14	8
Seasoned Spliff	6	3	2
Crack	2	0	0

