

## Introduction

Welcome to the eighth edition of the Consultation Board literature review, compiled by Researcher Mica Searles. The theme of this literature review explores public attitudes and perceptions towards drug misuse.

Exploring into **YouGov** data can give an insight into the demographics of social and criminal themes. In this literature review, the amount of Hampshire residents who have admitted to taking drugs will be explored.

The Scottish government wanted to examine the **Public Attitudes Towards People with Drug Dependence and People in Recovery**. The researchers explored into the themes as blame and intolerance of people with drug dependence, sympathy and care of drug dependency, fear and exclusion of people with drug dependence and perceptions of different types of drug users.

**Attitudes to Drug Dependence - Results from a Survey of People Living in Private Households in the UK** looks into the extent and nature of stigma among the general public towards people with drug dependency. The researchers were very interested in the types of drug users and whether they are accepted or not in today's society.

**The Prescription Drug Attitudes Questionnaire: Development and Validation** were conducted in the US to gather intelligence on how and why prescription drug misuse has increased over recent years.

Prescription drug misuse is becoming a serious health issue in certain parts of the world, especially in Nigeria. **Awareness, Knowledge, Perception and Attitude towards Prescription Medicines Abuse among Medicines Prescribers and Dispensers in Newi Nigeria provides** a perspective of drug dependency from an economically developing country.

**A cross-sectional study of public attitudes towards safer drug use practices in British Columbia, Canada (2013)** explores opinions on harm reduction services and strategies.

**Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England** is a big interest in social research. This literature review specifically examines the statistics and attitudes towards drug misuse amongst secondary school pupils.

**Investigating into Public attitudes to the sentencing of drug offences** is a section of drug misuse research that can be often overlooked. The purpose of sentencing, offence seriousness and sentencing case examples will be examined.

If you find articles to include within the review or for discussion, please email them to Mica ([mica.searles@hampshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:mica.searles@hampshire.pnn.police.uk)).

Anja Kimberley,

Consultation Board Chair.

## 1. YouGov Figures - people who have taken illegal drugs in Hampshire (2019)

YouGov is a global public opinion and data company. The data collection ranges from opinions on politics, demographics, lifestyle and the media. The table below shows the percentage of Hampshire residents who have admitted to taken illegal drugs.

<b>YouGov Profiles Great Britain 23-06-2019</b>	
<b>28/8 – taking illegal drugs - have/have not</b>	
<b>Have you ever taken illegal drugs?</b>	
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>“ I have” Total Percentage</b>
Portsmouth	44%
Southampton	13%
Isle of Wight	35%
Basingstoke and Deane	36%
East Hampshire	12%
Eastleigh	12%
Fareham	23%
Gosport	6%
Hart	6%
Havant	5%
New Forest	25%
Rushmoor	32%
Test Valley	14%
Winchester	38%
All	26%

Overall Hampshire Population who have taken illegal drugs: “Have you ever taken illegal drugs” = ‘I have’: 208

Portsmouth had the highest amount of people who have taken illegal drugs (44%). This is closely followed by Winchester at 38% and Basingstoke and Deane (36%).

Data analytics:

<https://profiles.crunch.io/dataset/4f1872d9f72d4b0788ba6ca73fdf2609/profiles?variableId=6af33ffe6bf44ced92c15ff64385667a>

Accessible: No

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## 2. Public Attitudes Towards People with Drug Dependence and People in Recovery (2016)

The Scottish Government wanted to tackle the issues of drug dependence in Scotland. They did this by conducting social research on the general public's attitudes and perceptions of drug dependency and recovering drug addicts.

### Methods

The Progressive Partnership collected data from using the YouGov online omnibus survey. A total of 1,114 questionnaires was completed. The final sample for analysis (with opt-out removed) was 1,089.

The sample consists of Scottish adults aged 18+ from different genders, socio-economic backgrounds and regions.

### Results

#### Blame and intolerance of people with drug dependence:

- The majority (29%) 'agree slightly' with the view that having a lack of self-discipline and willpower is one of the main causes of drug dependence.
- 26% 'disagree slightly' with the view that increasing budget costs on drug rehabilitation services would be a waste of money.
- 31% 'slightly disagree' with the view of people with drug dependence should not deserve their sympathy.

#### Sympathy and care statements around drug dependency:

- 39% 'agree slightly' with the view of drug dependency being an illness like any other long-term chronic health problem.
- 36% 'slightly agree' with the view that people with a history of drug dependence are often demonised in the media.
- 36% 'slightly agree' with the view that drug dependency is often caused by traumatic experiences such as abuse, poverty and bereavement.
- 26% 'slightly agree' with the statement that society needs a more tolerant attitude towards people with a history of drug dependence.

#### Fear and exclusion around drug dependency

- 29% 'slightly agree' with the view that people with a history of drug dependence are a burden on society.

## Acceptance and integration of people with a history of drug dependence

- 39% 'agree slightly' with the view that virtually anyone can become dependent on drugs.
- 41% 'slightly agree' with the statement of it being important for people recovering from drug dependence to be part of the community.
- 37% 'agree slightly' with the view that people recovering from drug dependence should have the same rights to a job as anyone else.

## Recovery from drug dependence

- 28% 'agree slightly' with the statement that people can never completely recover from drug dependence.

## Perceived acceptability of different types of drug use (majority)

- 36% think it is not acceptable to smoke cannabis a few times a week.
- 56% think it is not acceptable to use 'party drugs' at the weekend.
- 75% think that it is not acceptable to use heroin on a daily basis for six months.
- 74% think it is not acceptable to use cocaine every day.

Report:

<http://www.onlinelibraryaddictions.stir.ac.uk/files/2018/01/PublicAttitudes.pdf>

Accessible: Yes

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### 3. Attitudes to Drug Dependence - Results from a Survey of People Living in Private Households in the UK (2010)

The UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC) wanted to examine the barriers to recovery for people who have experienced drug addiction or dependency, including the attitudes and behaviours of the wider public.

#### Aim

The aim of this study was to investigate the extent and nature of stigma among the general public towards people with drug dependence and people who have recovered from drug dependence.

## Methods

A TNS-BMRB Face-to-Face omnibus survey was used. The total sample population consisted of 2,945 adults aged 16 and over. Interviews were conducted using computer-assisted personal interviewing and face-to-face inside the respondents' homes.

## Results

- Heroin was the least acceptable drug type in the UK, followed by cocaine and then cannabis.
- Survey respondents believed that these types of drug users were “acceptable” in the UK;
  - a middle-class woman who uses cocaine regularly at parties;
  - a 20-year-old who is dependent on heroin;
  - a 35-year-old adult who smokes cannabis a few times a week;
  - a 50-year-old dependent heroin user;
  - a 16-year-old who is using cannabis a few times a week; and
  - a professional man, such as an accountant, who uses cocaine regularly.

## Conclusion

There is a broad belief that people with a history of drug dependence are to blame for their condition; as a result, there is a lack of tolerance among a significant portion of the population.

Women hold slightly less negative attitudes towards those with a history of drug problems than do men.

Adults in both the youngest (16–29 years) and older age groups (60+ years) have more negative attitudes towards those with drug problems than those in other age groups.

People in the AB social groups (professional/managerial occupations) have more positive attitudes towards those with histories of drug dependency.

Report: [https://www.ukdpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Evidence%20review%20-%20Attitudes%20to%20drug%20dependence\\_%20survey%20results.pdf](https://www.ukdpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Evidence%20review%20-%20Attitudes%20to%20drug%20dependence_%20survey%20results.pdf)

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#### **4. Prescription Drug Attitudes Questionnaire: Development and Validation (2014)**

The misuse of prescription drugs the US has become a serious problem over recent years. The most commonly used prescription drugs were pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants and sedatives (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2011).

##### **Aim**

The aim/purpose of this study was to investigate and measure the attitudes towards using prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons.

##### **Methods**

The study consisted of 310 college students (210 females, 100 males) between the ages of 18 to 24 years.

The Prescription Drug Attitudes Questionnaire (PDAQ) was created to assess participants' attitudes and perceptions on various situations that involve the use of prescription medication for nonmedical use.

##### **Results**

The male students had a higher PDAQ score with an average of 43.68, compared to the female students (35.84).

The average number of times a month that participants reported using prescription pills (not prescribed to them by a health care provider) per month was .84

##### **Conclusion**

Prescription drug misusers having significantly more positive attitudes towards prescription drug use, compared to nonusers. Furthermore, there was a correlation between prescription drugs misuse and age, which could suggest that older students and middle to upper-class men are more likely to abuse these drugs.

Research Journal Article: [http://file.scirp.org/pdf/PSYCH\\_2014093011570787.pdf](http://file.scirp.org/pdf/PSYCH_2014093011570787.pdf)

Accessible: Yes

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## 5. Awareness, Knowledge, Perception and Attitude towards Prescription Medicines Abuse among Medicines Prescribers and Dispensers in Nnewi Nigeria (2015)

Prescription drug misuse is becoming a serious health issue in certain parts of the world, especially in Nigeria. The ease of access and cheaper prices are strong pull factors for prescription drug misuse in countries with higher levels of poverty.

### Aim

The aim/objective of this research is to assess awareness, knowledge, perception and attitudes toward the abuse of prescription medicines (PM) among medicines prescribers and dispensers in Nigeria.

### Methods

This was a cross-sectional study carried out amongst 375 respondents: made up of 40 pharmacists, 85 pharmacy staff and 67 licenced patent medicines vendors, 100 other drug handlers like nurses and laboratory staff, 83 medical doctors.

The sample population completed questionnaires whilst being supervised by trained research assistants. The questions were produced to assess the awareness, and attitudes towards prescription drug misuse.

### Results

- **Attitude towards prescription medicine abuse:** Majority of the respondents felt strongly about their role in the prevention of prescription drug abuse.

Doctor respondents found it **'Important/Very Important (81.9%)**.

Other respondents found also found it **'Important/Very important (77.4%)**

### Conclusion

The perception, awareness and knowledge about prescription medicine abuse as a problem in the communities are high among the health worker respondents especially the doctors. However, the attitude of the respondents towards early detection of PM abuse among their patients/clients is poor and discouraging.

Research Journal Article: [https://file.scirp.org/pdf/PP\\_2015052215024824.pdf](https://file.scirp.org/pdf/PP_2015052215024824.pdf)

Accessible: Yes

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## 6. A cross-sectional study of public attitudes towards safer drug use practices in British Columbia, Canada (2013)

### Aim

To understand the attitudes of the people of British Columbia (BC) towards various harm reduction strategies, services and factors associated with support for harm reduction.

### Methods

The researchers used random digit dialing telephone surveys and received 2,000 responses. All participants were 19 years old and over. The questions were based around general harm reduction, needle distribution services and safer inhalation distribution.

### Results

- **The overall support for each theme in harm reduction for drug misuse:**
  - General harm reduction (76%)
  - Needle distribution (72%)
  - Needle distribution in one's local community (65%)
  - Safer inhalation equipment distribution (52%)

Has the most support for harm reductions programmes by variables:

- **Gender:** Male (72.3%), Female (79.1%)
- **Age:** 35-54 (76.7%)
- **Education Level:** University graduate (81.3%)

### Conclusion

The majority of British Columbians in Canada are in support of harm reduction for drug misuse practices.

Research Journal Article:

<https://substanceabusepolicy.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1747-597X-8-40>

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## 7. Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England (2017)

The issue of smoking, drinking and drug use amongst young people has been an interest in social research. The experimental stage of trying recreational substances



is common amongst adolescents. Knowing how and why young people engage in this behaviour could give an insight into the adolescent culture.

## Methods

The survey used questions that monitored smoking, drinking and drug use amongst young people. The sample population consisted of 12,051 secondary pupils aged 11 to 15. This sample was spread across 177 schools throughout England.

The questions covered the themes of:

- Pupil's experience of smoking, drinking and drug use
- The amount of alcohol and cigarettes consumed in the last week
- Awareness of specifically named drugs

## Results

- 24% of pupils reported that they had taken some form of a drug substance. This has significantly increased from 15% in 2014.
- **Attitudes to taking drugs:**
  - 11% of pupils agreed it was OK for someone their own age to take cannabis to see what it was like; compared to 8% for sniffing glue, and 3% for taking cocaine.
- **Attitudes to people of pupil's age taking drugs, by age:**

The proportion of pupils who thought it was OK for someone their age to try drugs increased with age:

- 11 year-old pupils thinking it's ok to try cannabis: approx. 1%
- 11 year-old pupils thinking it's ok to try cocaine: approx. 1%
- 15 year-old pupils thinking it's ok to try cannabis: approx. 27%
- 15 year-old pupils thinking it's ok to try cocaine: approx. 5%

Report: <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/47/829A59/sdd-2016-rep-cor-new.pdf>

Accessible: Yes

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## 8. Public attitudes to the sentencing of drug offences (2011)

### Aim

The aim of this research was to investigate public attitudes to the sentencing of drug offences.

### Methods

The study mostly adopted a qualitative approach by conducting 15 focus groups. The sample population consisted of 121 participants (57% female and 73% male). The age range is between 18 to 82 years.

The questions covered the themes of;

- the relative gravity of different drug offences;
- the seriousness of offences in terms of both harm and culpability;
- the relevance of the type and class of drugs to the gravity of the offences;
- the purposes of sentencing drug offences.

### Results

- **Purposes of sentencing**

There was a strong agreement across the focus groups that rehabilitation was difficult to achieve in prison:

*“You’re just taking them off the streets, and then putting them back on the streets in the same position they went in”.*

The view that punishment on its own without any form of rehabilitation for drug use *“is just revenge - and I don’t much see the point in that”.*

- **Offence seriousness**

The participants were asked about the perceptions of the seriousness of drug offences. Many agree that that the person who is supplying the drugs are the main problem and should be punished more severely than people who are dependent on drugs:

*“The serious offences to me - are the supplier, and whoever’s making money out of it. Those are the serious, serious problems, and they’re making money out of that - something that’s destroying society”.*

- **Sentencing vignettes**

#### Case 1: Possession of cannabis

The majority of the participants felt that custody is not needed for someone who is caught with a small possession of cannabis (unless it was a repeat offence) Instead, rehabilitation services such as therapeutic intervention were believed to be a suited outcome. Others wanted a fine, warning or caution.

- **Case 3: Large-scale supply of heroin**

All participants agreed that they would want the offender to be charged with a custodial sentence for supplying large amounts of heroin. The majority selected the sentencing period of between 10 and 20 years.

- **Case 4: Medium-scale importation of cocaine**

The majority chose custody for the British student to be convicted of importing a moderate amount of cocaine. However, they were more lenient towards the example of a British Nigerian single mother who owed money to a drug dealer. Just over half of the participants did not want custody for her but they did want her to be deported.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the participants did not wish custodial sentences for drug possession and small to medium-scale drug importation offences.

However, they did want custodial sentences for large-scale importation sentences. This reflected the participants' perceptions of harm associated with drug supply and importation.

Report: [https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Drugs\\_research\\_report.pdf](https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Drugs_research_report.pdf)

Accessible: Yes