



CONNECTING YOUTH VOICES TO POWER

Findings from Alcohol and Drug Survey

Aim

To ensure the views of young people are fed into Issues Paper 12 on the Review of Laws on Use and Abuse of Alcohol and Drugs by the Constitutional Law Reform Commission (CLRC).

The Youth Coalition (YC)

This survey was disseminated and the findings analysed by the Youth Coalition, a network of 15-20 civil society organisations and groups that work with young people or on issues that affect youth in PNG.

Key findings

- 915 surveys were returned in just 24 days by young people 18-35 living in 12 provinces.
- The Youth Coalition model offers the ability to access youth voice across PNG in a short time with almost no additional resources needed.
- 94% of young people believe alcohol abuse is a serious problem with beer and home considered the most commonly abused alcohol.
- 86% of young people believe drug abuse is a problem in their communities with marijuana the most commonly abused drug.
- Young people believe that the biggest effect of the abuse of alcohol and drugs in their communities is violence including death, sexual and domestic violence.
- Based on their own recent experience, 85% of young people believe alcohol is easily accessible to youth under the age of 18 without the need to show identification.
- 69% of young people felt that rehabilitation options (like counselling) as opposed to punitive measures is the best way to address alcohol and drug abuse.

Methodology

We surveyed young people from September 20 to October 14 for the CLRC Review of Laws on the Use and Abuse for Alcohol and Drugs. The survey tool was reviewed and tested by members of the Youth Coalition strategic group and staff from the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission. We used an online and paper methodology to achieve 915 valid responses from young people from different parts of the country. The online survey was disseminated via the social media platforms of Youth Coalition partners and received 276 responses. The paper survey was taken physically to various parts of PNG and youth cohorts in Port Moresby by Youth Coalition partner staff. All paper responses were then entered into the online survey tool for ease of analysis.

Responses to the Survey were given on a confidential and non-attributable basis. All respondents were required to give consent for their results to be shared. Of 915 responses, 854 gave consent to share their responses publicly. Youth under 18 were not included to avoid more complex consent requirements.

The survey form was divided into three parts: **Part 1** gathered information about age group, sex, location and community type and whether there are working or schooling. **Part 2** asked about young people's voice in relation to participation in the national elections. **Part 3** focused on the use and the abuse of drugs and alcohol in young people's communities, ease of access to alcohol and possible responses to abuse.

Survey results

915 young people between the ages of 18-35 years of age participated in the survey. We had relatively equal representation of sexes with 45% of the respondents being female and 55% male.

57% of the respondents were between the age of 18-24 years old, representative of the high number of University and College students that participated in the survey (54% of responses). 24% of respondents were in the workforce.

Young people residing in 12 PNG provinces responded, increasing to 16 if home province is factored in. A reasonable mix of community type was represented with 63% living in towns or cities, 24% in Villages and 10% in settlements.

Use and Abuse of Alcohol and Drugs

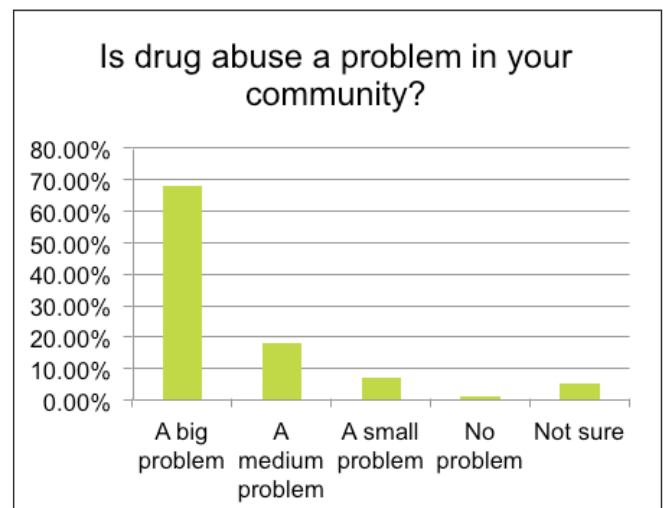
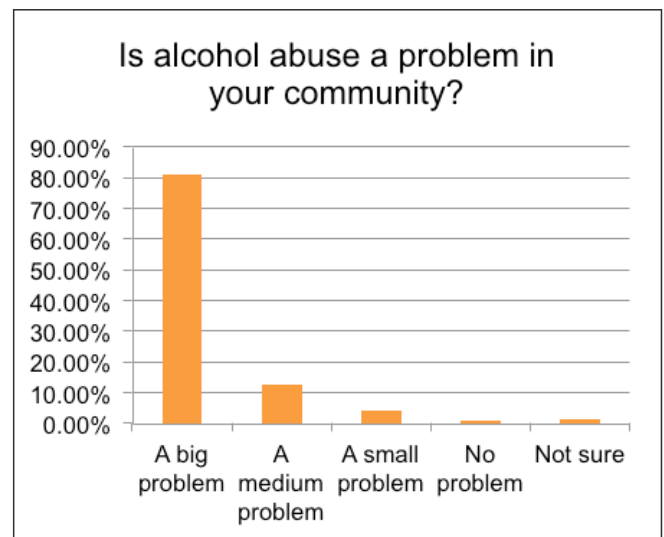
We asked respondents if alcohol abuse was a problem in their community. 81% of the respondents indicated that it was a big problem and a further 13% that it was a medium problem. Less than 1% of young people felt that alcohol abuse was 'no problem' in their communities.

Participants were asked to rank the most commonly consumed alcohol choosing from beer, home brew, spirits, wine and others. Beer and home brew were considered the most commonly consumed forms of alcohol.

Participants were then asked whether they felt drug abuse was a problem in their community. 68% of the respondents felt that drug abuse was a big problem and a further 18% consider it a medium problem. Marijuana was easily considered the most common drug used in communities.

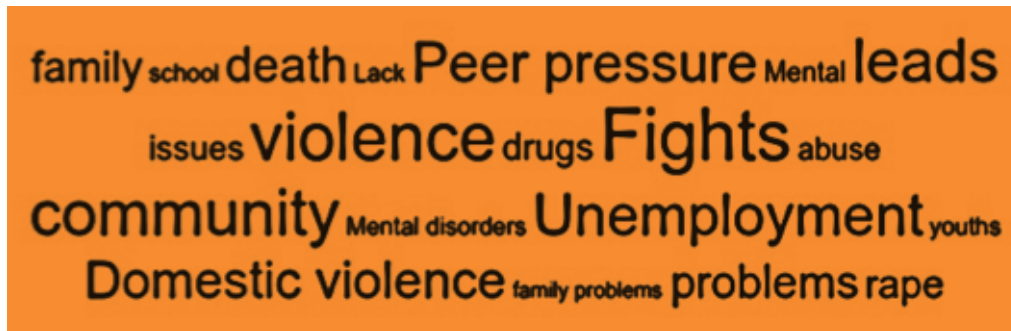
Awareness of Alcohol and Drug related Laws

44% of the youth indicated that they knew little to nothing about the laws relating to alcohol and drugs. Interestingly 56% indicated they know a lot (19%) or a 'fair bit' (37%) about these laws, indicating that at some level communication around these laws might be succeeding.



Effects of alcohol and drug abuse

Young people were then asked about the effects of alcohol and drug abuse in their communities. The image below depicts their responses with the largest words being the most common responses. The biggest overall category of effects was violence including death, sexual and domestic violence. Unemployment, peer pressure and community problems also featured strongly.



Underage access to alcohol

In line with CLRC interest in the supply and availability of alcohol, young people were asked about how easy it was to purchase alcohol under 18, without identification. To cross check this we asked only those who had had personal experience or knowledge of buying alcohol underage in the last 12 months to respond.

830 people responded to the question. An overwhelming 85% of respondents said that it was easy for young people under the age of 18 to access alcohol or that most stores did not ask for any identification.

Finding solutions

The survey asked the views of young people on what should be done to address the problem of alcohol and drug abuse. Respondents were asked if they thought the current fine of K50 for driving whilst intoxicated should be increased. 90% of respondents felt that the fine should be increased. Young people were then asked what they thought was the most effective way to deal with alcohol and drug abuse overall, choosing from the following options:

- Community service
- Increased jail time
- Counselling
- Rehabilitation Centres
- Increased fines

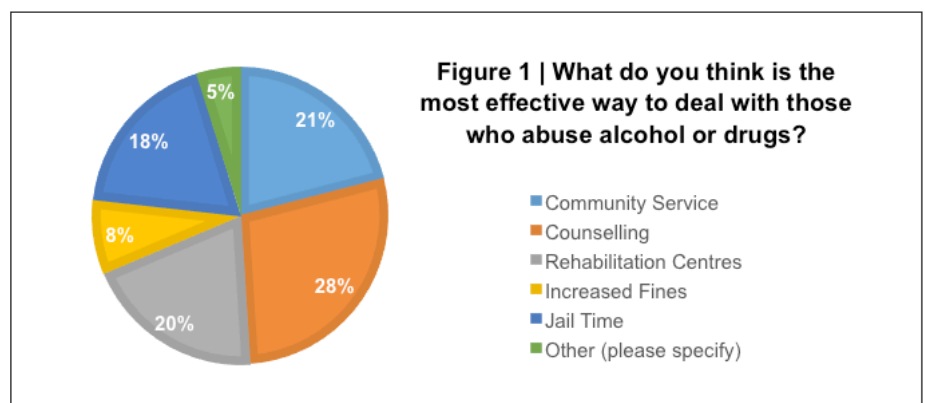


Figure 1 shows that 28% of young people feel that counselling is needed to help address the problem. Followed by 21% indicating community service and 19% rehabilitation centres. Overall, this is a significant 69% choosing rehabilitative solutions over the more punitive responses of jail time or increasing fines.

Recommendations

1. Increase investment in counselling services, rehabilitation centres and clear referral pathways for those who abuse alcohol and drugs.
2. Given the scale of the problem, increase investment in drug and alcohol abuse education and early intervention programs targeting school and university students.
3. Increase fines or penalties for licensed premises supplying alcohol to those under 18.
4. That Youth and youth focused organizations work more closely in partnership with the National Youth Development Authority to channel the concerns of young people up to government.

Acknowledgements

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