

Estimated Size of the Drug Misuse Population in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Problem Statement: The present study is the first national household survey of drug misuse. Preliminary results are presented for 4 type of drugs: antipyretic drugs(i.e.aspirin mixed with caffeine), cough mixture, hypnotics, and tranquilizers.

Design and Method: The estimated study population covers those aged 12-65 years old. Data gathering was conducted from March to August 2001. Sampling covered municipal and non-municipal areas of Bangkok, 3 peripheral provinces of Bangkok and other provinces selected from the Central, Northern Northeastern, and Southern regions. 650 clusters were selected in total and 24 households were sampled from each cluster. One person from each of the following age groups: 12-24; 25-44; and 45-65, stratified by gender, was selected for interview in each household. The total sample was 37,616 persons(weighted for the total population, 12-65 years).

Results: Misuse of a drug was defined as more than 20 days use within a month before the interview. The most prevalent drug type was **antipyretics**. 1 million people used these for more than 20 days. Estimates were highest in the Bangkok area (61,700) but people in non-municipal areas used about 3 times more than those from municipal areas. Among occupational groups, farmers formed the majority of users (28.0%) followed by the unemployed (23.0%). Male farmers tended to use more than females, while unemployed males used less than females. About 167,600 persons used **hypnotics** more than 20 days per month and 42% of these were in the Northern region. Those from non-municipal areas used more than those from municipal areas. Females (123,300) used about 3 times more than males (44,300). Among males, the percentage of farmers using hypnotics was the highest, followed by laborers and vehicle drivers (23.7%). **Cough mixture** use was found to be nearly as prevalent as hypnotics (146,900). Those from the Central region reported the highest levels of use (61,800). 29.1 % of female users were unemployed, while 28.6% of males were laborers or drivers. **Tranquilizers** were ranked lowest in terms of drug misuse. Only 64,800 persons reported using them more than 20 days. About 75% of the use was in non-municipal areas. Females formed the majority of users. In this group, 27.9% were farmers and 25.6% were unemployed.

Conclusions: This study has documented the first estimates of drug misuse in Thailand and important differences were found between males and females and certain occupational groups. The presentation will also discuss study limitations and explore future research questions.

Key word :

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