

**FEDERATION OF ST. KITTS AND NEVIS
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION**



**REPORT
ON THE
NATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL DRUG SURVEY
2006**

THE FEDERATION OF ST. KITTS & NEVIS
SECONDARY SCHOOL NATIONAL DRUG SURVEY 2006

This report represents the results of a 2006 National Drug Survey conducted under the auspices of the St. Kitts & Nevis National Council on Drug Abuse Prevention (NACDAP SKN) in collaboration with the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID), the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), and Organization of American States (OAS), using the Inter-American Uniform Drug Use Data System (SICUC). The information herein reflects the findings of a 2006 confidential, nation-wide survey of 2,100 second, fourth, and sixth form students attending both public and private secondary schools, as well as sixth form equivalent students at the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College in the Federation of St. Kitts & Nevis.

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Map 1: The Caribbean

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Map 2: St. Kitts & Nevis

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A confidential drug-use survey of second and fourth form secondary school students, as well as sixth form-equivalent students at the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College students, was conducted in the Federation of St. Kitts & Nevis in 2006. Collected were (i) basic biographical data on respondents i.e., age, gender, parental education attainment, educational expectations, behavioral profile; (ii) familiarity with health impact of various illicit drugs; (iii) the logistical details associated with drug and alcohol use, i.e., the age of initiation, sources of supply, frequency of usage, ease of use. The mood-altering substances about which students were questioned were cigarettes, alcohol, non-prescription tranquilizers/stimulants, solvents, heroin, opium, morphine, hallucinogens, hashish, marijuana, power cocaine, crack cocaine, coca paste, and ecstasy. Two thousand one hundred students participated in the survey, almost evenly split by gender, i.e., 48% male, 52% female. Ninety-seven percent of the students attended public schools, 3%, private.

By far, the mood-altering substance that was reportedly used with greatest frequency was alcohol, with 66% percent of all respondents having tried it at some time in their lives. Next was the general category of “any illegal drug”, with 35% of students having partaken at some time. Twenty-four percent of students reported having used marijuana at least once. (See Table 4.1)

The reported age of initiation for cigarettes, alcohol, cocaine and crack was consistently ages 11 to 12, with the age of initiation for marijuana being slightly higher, at 12 – 14. (See Table 4.4) Forty percent of students reported that obtaining marijuana was “easy”, while roughly the same percentage reported that it is “difficult or impossible” to obtain crack or cocaine

In all three student groupings, alcohol usage by girls was greater than alcohol usage by boys – the only mood-altering substance for which girls consistently recorded higher usage for all ages and all forms. (See Table 4.2)

Those students who described themselves as having frequent behavioral problems also reported the highest use of alcohol, marijuana, and other “illegal drugs”. While there seems to be no relationship between academic performance and alcohol usage, [i.e., students use alcohol regardless of their academic standing], the weaker students, academically, tend to use marijuana, cocaine, or “illegal drugs” with greater frequency than the academically stronger students.

Sixty-eight percent of the students surveyed report having no curiosity about illicit drugs. Seventy-two percent indicated that they would not try illicit drugs even if given the opportunity. [Because alcohol use by adults is not illegal in St. Kitts & Nevis, many young people in the federation tend not to classify alcohol, when used by underage individuals, as an “illicit drug”. Marijuana also tends to be seen as separate from “hard drugs.”]

Between 9 and 16% of students report that they do not know whether frequent drinking of alcohol, actual drunkenness, occasional use of marijuana, frequent use of marijuana, occasional use of cocaine, frequent use of cocaine, inhaling of second hand cigarette smoke, or inhaling of second-hand marijuana smoke is harmful.

While 36% of students’ mothers attended secondary school, 39% percent of the students surveyed were completely unaware as to their mothers’ levels of educational attainment, suggesting a less than optimal degree of parent/child communication for these students.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research upon which this report is based, and the writing of the report itself, was made possible through the funding and support of the Organization of American States and the cooperation of the Government and people of the Federation of St. Kitts & Nevis.

Special appreciation is owed to:

- Dr. Eileen Mac Lachlan-Moore, GEC/Coordinator, National Council on Drug Abuse Prevention, St. Kitts
- Paula A. Hazel, National Drug Council
- The principals and students of the participating public and private secondary schools in St. Kitts & Nevis
- The Government of St. Kitts & Nevis, with special thanks to:
 - Office of the Prime Minister/ Minister of the National Drug Council
 - Office of the Premier of Nevis
 - Ministry of National Security
 - Ministry of Education

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the National Council on Drug Abuse Prevention (NACDAP) of St. Kitts & Nevis, in collaboration with the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID), using the Inter-American Uniform Drug Use Data System (SIDUC)], conducted a voluntary, confidential, nation-wide survey of the 2,100 second, fourth, and sixth formers in the Federation of St. Kitts & Nevis. The purpose of the survey was to (i) ascertain the degree of drug and alcohol usage by these students, (ii) gain insights into initiation into and attitudes regarding drug and alcohol usage, and (iii) use insights thus gleaned to formulate more effective school and community-based drug education and drug prevention programs. It was also felt that the insights gleaned as a result of this survey could also be of value to the National Drug Council in the creation of appropriate student assistance program-based counseling, treatment, and rehabilitation.

In addition, a St. Kitts & Nevis 2003-2004 Evaluation of Progress in Drug Control report issued by the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism had reported that the average age of first use of drug abuse for males was 9 years (morphine), and for females 9 years (ecstasy). A survey drug use in St. Kitts & Nevis' private and public secondary schools, therefore, was viewed as an important means gaining greater insight regarding initiation into, and involvement in, drug use by the federation's adolescents.

1.1 Country Background

The Federation of St. Kitts & Nevis is a two-island state with a combined population of 46,000 and a combined land mass of 104 square miles. A former British colony, St. Kitts & Nevis became a sovereign nation in 1983. St. Kitts & Nevis is a middle income country. The nation is overwhelmingly Christian, although recent immigrants from Asia, North America, Africa, Europe, and Latin America has gradually been injecting new religious influences. The Government of St. Kitts & Nevis provides universal education up to the secondary level free of charge, and the country has a 98% literacy rate in 2007/2008.

1.2 Genesis of Drug Phenomenon

According to The International Narcotics Strategy Report, "The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis (GOSKN) is party to the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1988 UN Drug Convention."

Unfortunately, however, the Caribbean archipelago is, unfortunately, located between one of the world's largest producer of illegal narcotics, i.e. South America, and one of the world's largest consumers of illegal narcotics, i.e. the United States. This has resulted, over the years, in the Caribbean being used as a drug transshipment point for goods headed to the North American mainland, and this practice has gradually caused illegal narcotics not only to be shipped through the Caribbean, but to indeed be introduced into Caribbean societies as well.

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Methodology

Authorization to conduct the survey was sought and obtained from the Ministry of Education, principals of the federation's secondary schools, and the principal of the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College, and the survey was conducted over a two-week period in the first term of the 2006/2007 academic year.

A detailed time-line was established for the completion of all pertinent activities, and an August 29, 2006 training session was conducted by Pernell Clarke of the OAS/CICAD/OID to ensure that there was a cadre of trained facilitators involved in administering the survey, as well as trained data entry personnel to input collected data.

The CICAD training ensured that all facilitators had a uniform understanding of (i) the purpose of the exercise, (ii) the agreed upon approach to the students during the conduct of the survey, and (iii) the appropriate response to questions that might reasonably be posed by students.

The questionnaire was self-administered.

In anticipation of students being reticent due to fear of authorities being apprised of their responses, teachers and guidance counselors were not allowed to be facilitators.

The Inter-American Uniform Drug Use System (SIDUC), the standardized questionnaire for secondary schools, was used. In light of the wide range of cultures using this survey, NCDAP reviewed the terminology used in the survey with the students being surveyed, with an eye to improving the chances of survey respondents understanding what was being asked of them.

Student responses were double-data entered in Excel by trained data entry personnel prior to being forwarded to CICAD/OAS.

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SECTION TWO: FINDINGS

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FINDINGS

The data suggests that drug usage amongst second and fourth form students, as well as sixth-form equivalent students at the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College is not wide-spread. [Because adult use of alcohol is legal in the federation, this has traditionally caused the public to not to group alcohol with the other “illegal drugs” enumerated in this survey]. Even more significantly, with the aforementioned proviso in mind, there seems to be neither a broad-based curiosity about illegal drugs, nor an inclination to experiment should the opportunity present itself. What is apparent, however, based on the data, is that alcohol consumption is quite common, and that neither one’s academic performance, one’s expectations as to whether or not one will complete school, one’s behavioral profile, nor whether one attends public or private school is a strong indicator of whether one will, or will not, consume alcohol. In other words, the consumption of alcohol seems generally widespread. (See Table 4.1). Surprisingly, also, in all age groups, the data suggests that a higher percentage of female students have used alcohol (i) at least once, (ii) within the year preceding the survey, and (iii) within the month preceding the survey, than have male students. (See Table 4.2)

Public and private school usage of alcohol was roughly matched, while public school use of marijuana was roughly twice that found in private schools. Where solvents and inhalants were concerned, however, private school usage was roughly three times that of public schools. (Table 4.3)

Whether a student had used alcohol, marijuana, or any other illegal drug in the month prior to the survey, the year prior to the survey, or at some time in the student’s life, the highest incidence of alcohol, marijuana, or other drug usage was found amongst students who describe themselves as (i) having “frequent” behavioral problems, (ii) having repeated two or more grades or courses, and (iii) who deem it “impossible” to complete high school.

The vast majority of students have never been offered illegal drugs. Sixty-nine percent of them have never been offered marijuana; 96% percent have never been offered cocaine; and 95% have never been offered crack. In the month preceding the survey, however, 12% of students report having been offered marijuana; 1% cocaine; and 2%, crack.

A solid sub-set of the student population (80%) reports either having no curiosity to try “illicit drugs” or being unsure. And 92% of students report that they would not try illegal drugs even if offered. On the other hand, 19% of all students admit to a curiosity about illicit drugs, and 8% report that, given the opportunity, they would try these drugs.

Eighty-six percent of students deem the “frequent” drinking of alcohol to be either slightly to moderately harmful, or very harmful; and 86% deem getting drunk to be either slightly to moderately harmful, or very harmful. Yet 66 % of students have used alcohol at some time in their lives, 48% in the year preceding the survey, and 31% in the month preceding the survey. Six percent of students did not consider frequent drinking to be harmful; 4 % considered getting drunk to be harmless.

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The students seem to be well-informed regarding the dangers of both marijuana and cocaine. 76% percent of all students considered “smoking marijuana sometimes” to be somewhere between slightly and very harmful. Eighty-one percent deemed the “frequent smoking of marijuana” to be somewhere between slightly and very harmful. Twelve percent of students, however, think that the occasional smoking of marijuana is harmless, and 8% think that there are no dangers associated with the frequent smoking of marijuana.

Eighty-one percent of students think that using cocaine, whether occasionally or frequently, is harmful, while 3% believe that neither the occasional nor the frequent use of cocaine will harm the user.

Similarly, the vast majority of students believed that second-hand cigarette and marijuana smoke were both harmful (81% and 79% respectively), while 4% thought that second-hand cigarette smoke was harmless, 7% thought that second hand marijuana smoke was not harmful, and 14-15% did not know whether either was.

There is a distinct possibility that many of the students were presented with questions the meanings of which would normally have been unclear. Coca paste, hallucinogens, inhalants, and other references, for example, would in all likelihood have been unfamiliar concepts to the vast majority of students in St. Kitts & Nevis. NCDAP made a special effort to familiarize survey respondents with this terminology in order to enhance the value of the responses provided.

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DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion and Recommendations

The questionnaire on which this survey was based tested student attitudes toward, and usage of, a wide range of illicit substances. Traditionally, many of the substances included in the survey have not been readily available in St. Kitts & Nevis, however, it was deemed essential that survey respondents be questioned on the widest possible range of illegal drugs so as to permit survey analysts to impartially identify those illicit substances around which student usage tends to cluster.

Survey results indicate that student usage of solvents and inhalants, cigarettes, tranquilizers, stimulants, cocaine, crack, and ecstasy were not only minimal, but were, indeed, dwarfed by the use of alcohol and marijuana. (See Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

The data collected indicates that traditional societal restraints that used to govern the use of alcohol by minors in St. Kitts & Nevis have evaporated over time. Programs should, therefore, be put in place by the relevant authorities to impress upon pre-adolescents both the benefits associated with abstinence, as well as the health implications of premature alcohol usage by teenagers.

Ages 10 to 13 represents a period of special vulnerability, where initiation into the world of drugs and alcohol is concerned, in St. Kitts & Nevis. Outreach programs, implemented well in advance of children reaching this age, should therefore be developed and implemented.

There is a school of thought that links drug use by the young with low self-esteem. This data suggests that high school students who are not doing very well academically, who have behavioral problems, and who do not expect to graduate, use alcohol, crack, cocaine, and marijuana with greater frequency than students who fit the opposite profile. Pre-emptive and corrective programs in the primary schools, to aid students who (i) are struggling academically, (ii) have behavioral difficulties, and (iii) whose expectations of life are low may help to prevent some of the self-esteem problems which may be a factor in later drug experimentation. In addition, creative, culturally resonant programs should be developed to inform primary school students about the dangers of experimenting with illegal drugs, since the data suggests that some 10 – 12 % of the student population surveyed was completely unaware of the implications of using the substances about which they were asked to comment in this survey.

More than half of the one month prevalence alcohol use was accounted for by wine (25%) and beer (23%), perhaps reflecting the mistaken assumption on the part of adolescents that wine and beer are not “hard liquor” and therefore may be of minimal detriment. Programs outlining both the health and behavioral dangers associated even with “soft” liquor may help to avert the continued underestimation of the impact of these substances by the federation’s youth.

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T A B L E S

Table 4.1

Lifetime Prevalence: Substance Usage Second, Fourth, and Sixth Form Students St. Kitts & Nevis, November 2006	
Substance	Percentage of Students
Alcohol	66%
Any Illegal Drugs	35%
Marijuana	14%
Solvents & Inhalants	14%
Cigarettes	13%
Tranquilizers	3%
Stimulants	3%
Coca Paste	2%
Cocaine	2%
Crack	2%
Ecstasy	2%
Heroin	1%
Opium	1%
Morphine	1%
Hallucinogens	1%
Hashish	1%

The use of marijuana and alcohol amongst second, fourth and sixth formers in St. Kitts & Nevis dwarfed the use of other illegal substances in 2006.

Table 4.2

Use of Alcohol by Gender	Male	Female
Lifetime prevalence of alcoholic drinks	64.56%	67.08%
One-year prevalence of alcoholic drinks	45.23%	50.05%
One-month prevalence of alcoholic drinks	29.39%	32.58%

Alcohol usage was consistently higher amongst the female students surveyed than amongst the males.

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Table 4.3

Use Of Solvents and Inhalants	Public	Private
Lifetime prevalence of solvents and inhalants	13.26%	21.88%
One-year prevalence of solvents and inhalants	5.86%	14.75%
One-month prevalence of solvents and inhalants	3.99%	11.48%

Private school use of solvents and inhalants was dramatically greater than public school usage.

Table 4.4

Age of Initiation: Cocaine, Crack, Cigarettes, Alcohol, Marijuana	
Substance	Age Range
Cocaine	10-12 years
Crack	11-12 years
Cigarettes	11-12 years
Alcohol	11-12 years
Marijuana	12-14 years

Figure 5.1

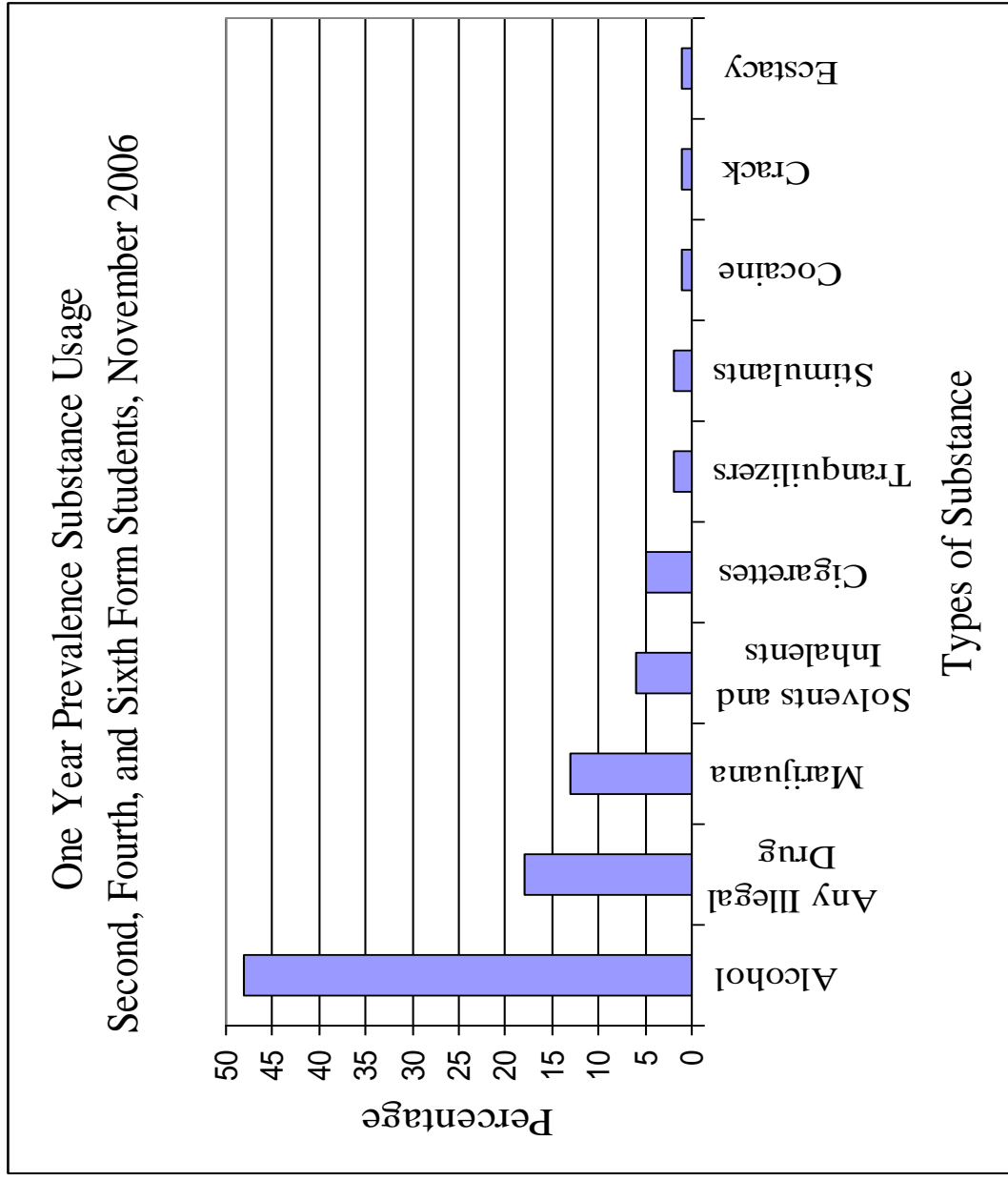


Figure 5.2

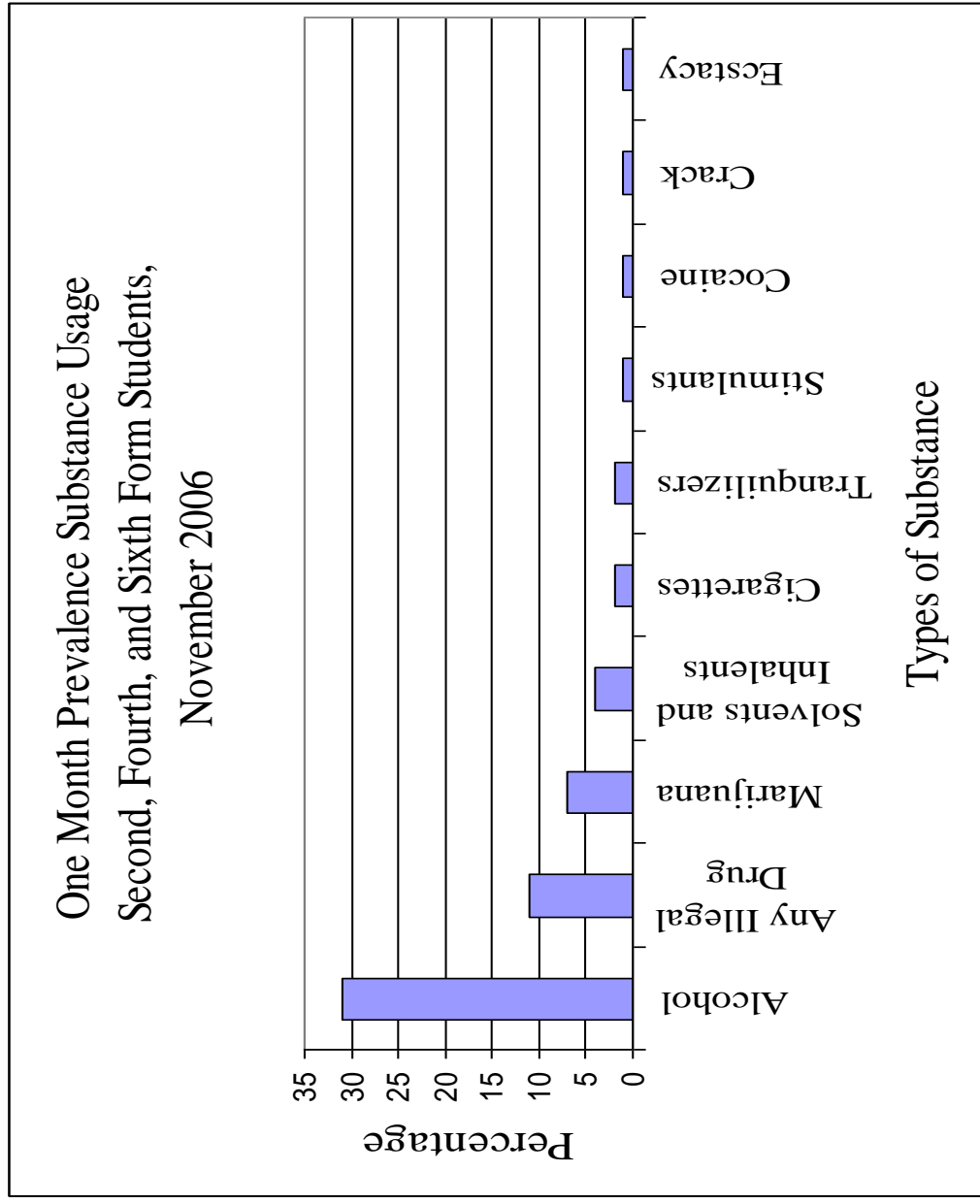


Figure 5.3

