

Females close gender gap on drug abuse

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The National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA) is reporting an increase in the number of adolescent female drug abusers. A National School Survey, which was conducted in 2006 among students in grades eight, 10 and 11, found that the gap between the number of adolescent male and female drug abusers was narrowing.

"The gender gap, where drug use is concerned, is narrowing," Executive Director of the NCDA, Michael Tucker, told JIS News. He noted that "historically, we would have a male-female ratio of 2:1 where drug usage is concerned, but that is narrowing significantly." Some 5,000 students between the ages of 11 and 19 from 70 high schools across the island participated in the survey. peer pressure According to Mr. Tucker, the research found that peer pressure was the major reason for using drugs. However, coping with stress and relaxation were also indicated as some of the other emerging factors. "Our young people are under significant stress at home and at school because of various reasons, such as the lack of parental support and the need to perform academically," he said. In the meantime, director of information and research at the NCDA, Ellen Campbell-Grizzle, said that with research showing that more women were using drugs, prevention planners will have to change their strategy. "As prevention planners, we relied on women to support us in our efforts traditionally, but now we will have to rethink our strategy because that support may no longer be there," she said. According to Mrs. Campbell-Grizzle, inhalants are the main drugs used by females. "We have seen that women use inhalants more than 2:1 when compared with men among the youth population that we studied," she said, noting that "they experiment with whiteouts, acetone in nail polish remover, floor polish, gasolene and other substances, which at room temperature give off an odour that is intoxicating." These chemicals, she pointed out, are inexpensive and insidious, and are not recognised as drugs.

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