

## AVAILABILITY

Availability can be a major factor determining whether people use a specific drug. In Nigeria for example cannabis is widely grown in the country, and consequently the supply of the drug is greater. As a result people are more likely to use cannabis and experience more problems with it. Heroin and cocaine is not however produced in Nigeria and so it is less available and more difficult to obtain. Stronger law enforcement does restrict supplies of drugs but with ongoing high demand for drugs the closure of all global and national drug trafficking routes has not yet been achieved.

## PRICE

How much a drug costs plays a major role in how widely it is used. Drugs are like a commodity or a product and when they are available in high quantities they tend to be cheaper to buy, and the cheaper the price the more likely the drug will appeal to more people. Affordability remains an important factor when using a specific drug. Evidence has shown that if the price rises too high, people start seeking out a cheaper alternative if they can no longer afford their preferred choice. Alternatively a person starts mixing one drug with other drugs to try and reach their desired 'high'.

## PURITY (Strength/Grade/Quality)

The purity of a drug refers to the strength of a specific drug. A person's individual perception of purity can be influenced by their tolerance and frequency of use. The purity of the drug can also be impacted upon by external forces, such as law enforcement efforts which can over time reduce the quantity of the drug entering a country. With less supply, illegal market forces commonly reduce the purity of the drug to ensure the demand of the drug

can still be met. Among those using a drug with decreased purity it is commonly found that over time these same drug users start seeking other substitutes (replacing one drug with another) with higher purity to match their needs and tolerance.

## MULTIPLE (POLY) DRUG USE

Globally a growing number of drug users combine a variety of drugs to increase the intensity of their drug experience. Combining substances such as cannabis, alcohol and prescription medications without thinking about side effects and how different drugs interact with each other has given rise to an increasing number of harmful side effects, and can be extremely dangerous. The more drugs a person takes (or is affected by) at a time, the more chance there is of something going wrong. Some people may smoke cannabis to 'come down' from the stimulating effects of cocaine or amphetamines and the person may suffer the side effects of these drugs.

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RESPONSE TO DRUGS AND RELATED ORGANISED CRIME IN NIGERIA  
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# WHY PEOPLE USE DRUGS



## INTRODUCTION

There is no one reason as to why a person will use a drug as the reasons will vary from one person to another. It can be for relaxation, enjoyment, excitement, peer pressure, rebellion, boredom, and for curiosity. For other people drugs can be used to avoid or reduce physical or psychological pain. The majority of people that use drugs wish to feel better or be different and commonly want to change something about their lives. Common statements from young people as to why they use drugs include:

- "Someone had some and I just thought I would try it"
- "All my friends were doing it so I thought why not?"
- "It made me feel really good"
- "All my problems from school, at home and in life just went away"

Using drugs is not a question of individual choice or morality, but there are various reasons that put some individuals at risk of drug use and its negative consequences. These are outside the individual's

control and include factors like detrimental childhood experience, lack of warm and safe parenting, availability of substances, living in a high stress environment and lack of access to sufficient health care, social support, education and employment etc.

Some drugs such as cough mixtures are sold over-the-counter to treat medical conditions and some drugs are prescribed by medical practitioners. These drugs are classified as legal drugs but can also be used in a way in which it was not intended. Some common illegal drugs include cannabis, cocaine and heroin. Some people who use legal or illegal drugs do become dependent on the substances.

## SOME TYPES OF DRUGS USED IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria the most common illegal drug used is cannabis and is found in urban and rural areas. Other drugs used include cocaine, heroin, amphetamine-type stimulants and substances such as benzodiazepines (drugs that produce sedation and relaxing of muscles). Inhalants and solvents sometimes referred to as a volatile substance (such as glue) is found among street children and sometimes by children in school. The majority of drug users in Nigeria are male.

## CATEGORY OF DRUG USE

It is possible for some people to move between various categories of drug use and become dependent or develop serious problems as a result of using them. But one stage will not inevitably lead to another such as graduating (shifting) from social use to drug dependence or cause serious problems. Drug use category is as follows:

### Experimental use

A person tries a drug once or twice out of curiosity but does not use it again. For example, a young person does not drink alcohol but was curious when observing friends drinking alcohol and having fun. The young person decided to drink alcohol with friends but disliked the experience and did not drink alcohol again.

### Recreational/social use

A person chooses to use a drug for enjoyment, particularly to improve a mood or for a social occasion. The majority of people that use drugs for these reasons never develop drug dependency problems as a result.

### Situational use

A person may use a drug to cope with the demands of particular situations such as responding to peer group pressure, overcoming shyness in a social situation or coping with some form of stress either personal or work related.

### Intensive use

A person may intentionally use a large amount of a drug over a short period of time, which may last for hours, days or sometimes weeks. This can take place over a week-end if it is a period of much socializing.

### Dependent use

A person is more likely to become dependent on drugs after prolonged or heavy use. Under these circumstances the person needs to take the drug consistently in order to feel normal and/or to avoid uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms.

### Therapeutic use

A person takes a drug, such as a prescribed pharmaceutical drug for medical purposes, for example to help increase appetite during sickness so as to eat more food.

## WHY DO PEOPLE CHOOSE CERTAIN DRUGS?

Majority of people choose to use specific drug/s as they enjoy particular feelings that come from using them. For example people can use cannabis or drink alcohol to relax and relieve stress while other people like to use cocaine to increase their energy and boost their confidence.

There is evidence to show that using one drug does not necessarily lead people to try other drugs. For example there are many people who use cannabis but do not use other drugs such as heroin or cocaine. However, the type of drugs that are used by a person may be influenced by the availability, price and purity of specific drugs. It can be the combination of these factors that may determine which drug a person uses. For example if the law enforcement effort can reduce the availability of a specific drug, which leads to an increase in the price, research does show a drug user may commonly switch to an alternative drug that is available and at an affordable price to satisfy their needs.

## EFFECTS

The feelings a person can experience when using a specific drug can play an important role as to why they have decided to use it. Some drugs are used as they complement the surroundings or an occasion and so a person may use for example cocaine or amphetamine-type stimulant to increase their energy during a visit to a nightclub where there is much dancing. Others who are wishing to relax after work or reduce stress may use alcohol or cannabis.