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# REPORT ON ATS SURVEY IN VIET NAM

Ha Noi, 27 April 2012

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**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



## AMPHETAMINE-TYPE STIMULANTS IN VIET NAM

REVIEW OF THE AVAILABILITY, USE AND  
IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH AND SECURITY



*“Support for developing effective ATS prevention strategies and  
measures for East Asia:  
A Pilot in Viet Nam”  
VNM/J93  
Viet Nam Country Office*

2012

# OBJECTIVES

- 1) To understand ATS patterns and trends of availability and use in Vietnam
- 2) To use the data to inform discussion and design of intervention activities

# Section A - Findings from Arrest, Seizure & Forensic Data between 2005-2010

## SECTION A

### PATTERNS AND TRENDS OF SEIZURE, AVAILABILITY AND USE OF ATS IN VIET NAM (Part 1)

#### A REVIEW OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK, LAW ENFORCEMENT, HEALTH SECTOR AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR IN THE CONTEXT OF RESPONDING TO ATS IN VIET NAM (Part 2)

This section of the report is essentially split into two components. Part 1 describes the different types of ATS in Viet Nam by analysing multiple data sets that have been made available through the combined resources of Standing Office on Drugs and Crime (SODC) and UNODC and the support of both the Institute of Forensic Science and Counter-Narcotic Police Department. In particular this section of the report presents findings from the chemical forensic science that has examined the composition of various types of ATS that have been seized by the police over the period between 2005 and 2010. This section also uses data obtained from the police relating to arrests and seizures of ATS types of ATS to describe trends in availability and distribution as well as to describe the trafficking and distribution types of ATS and highlight geographical locations where ATS use appears to be more prevalent than in other locations. In combination with secondary data analysis, a literature review was conducted in order to describe the historical patterns and trends of ATS use in Viet Nam.

Part 2 of this report analyses information from Key Informant Interviews conducted with Police Officials, Emergency staff and Entertainment Sector/Managers to ascertain the current level of understanding about the extent of use of ATS in urban settings in Viet Nam and how the various sectors are responding to ATS.

The main findings relating to this section of the report include:

- There are many types of ATS in Viet Nam but the main types of ATS that are both available and being used are methamphetamine (in both tablet and crystal form), and Ecstasy (in both tablet and MDMA powder form).
- The availability and use of ATS increased slowly between 2005 and 2007 but has increased more rapidly since then.
- Seizures of ATS only represent about 4% of the total seizures of illicit drugs in Viet Nam.

- The tablet form of Ecstasy and Ketamine as appearance meaning you to know exactly what it and using.
- ATS precursor material in Viet Nam but its production facility has
- ATS is trafficked countries and in along the main highway predominantly not
- Police rely main information is traffickers. The equipment is identifying p environment
- These are sig of ATS an professor manager
- Bar on know but are with f use o disse chik

#### Methods:

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Photo 1.2: Seized MDMA (Ecstasy) tablets and capsules.

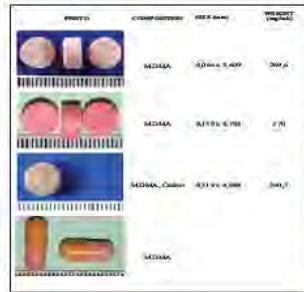


Photo 1.3: Seized Ketamine in appearance as the seized tablets and capsules.



#### Ketamine

Although not actually a stimulant<sup>33</sup>, Ketamine has been increasingly seized in Viet Nam. It originally appeared in Viet Nam in its pharmaceutical form but over the last two or three years has been found<sup>34</sup> more commonly in tablet and crystal form. It is significant for this report as it is often found either in a tablet form on its own but is also being used as an adulterant in methamphetamine and Ecstasy tablets. International literature suggests that illicit recreational use of Ketamine is often in combination with other ATS drugs, or among people who use MDMA and Ecstasy. In Viet Nam, the availability and use of Ketamine widespread but has increased in parallel with use. Actual case numbers are small and have been detected in nightclubs.

**Legal Status:** Ketamine is listed on a list of Table III which refers to sub-poisonous narcotic substances and is limited to analysis, testing, and criminal investigations or in the required by treatment needs, a 133/2003/ND-CP dated 06/11

33 Ketamine is a dissociative anaesthetic currently used in human anaesthesia and. It is manufactured in clear liquid form and when street has generally been diverted from veterinary supply, encapsulated into a white, soluble powder form.

34 Maxwell, C (2005), Party drugs: properties, prevalence, patterns, and problems. Substance Use and Misuse, 40(9-10), 1203-1240.

27

**MDMA:** The police continued to rely on both raids on bars, conduct rapid urine tests and police counter trafficking operations to identify and arrest suspects. Police case notes related to ATS in 2006 report:

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 2006, Police of Cam Phu District in Quang Ninh Province reported Phung New Khanh had seized 17 young male and female using pseudo drugs. Rapid urine testing showed that 17 out of the 17 subjects had a positive urine result for the presence of 'ATS' in violation of MDMA tablets were seized.

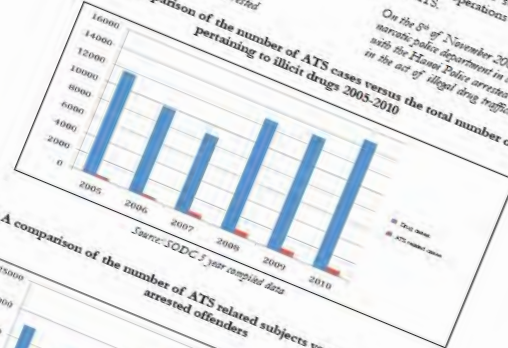
On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2006, Division on Precursor and Synthetic Drug related Crime of the Counter-narcotic Police Department in coordination with police forces of Thai Binh province arrested

a man of Chinese nationality in the act of illegal drug trafficking, seizing 1,000 tablets of MDMA and 34.4 grams of Ketamine.

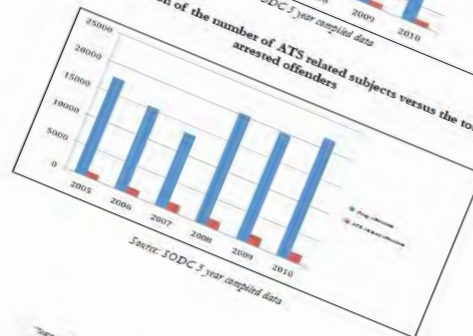
In 2007, the police reported a small increase in the number of ATS related cases, 500 cases and 1,500 subjects. This still represented only a small amount of the total illicit drug-related arrests which numbered 8,950 cases and 13,568 subjects. During this year, the first reports of the increasing availability of low types of ATS and other substances seized during operations. Single operations still only yielded small amounts of ATS.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2007, Counter-narcotic police department in coordination with the Hanoi Police arrested 5 subjects in the act of illegal drug trafficking and

Graph 1.5: A comparison of the number of ATS cases versus the total number of cases pertaining to illicit drugs 2005-2010




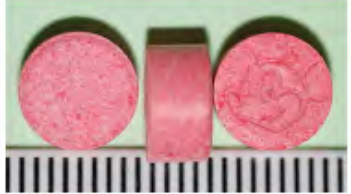






Graph 1.6: A comparison of the number of ATS related subjects versus the total number of arrested offenders

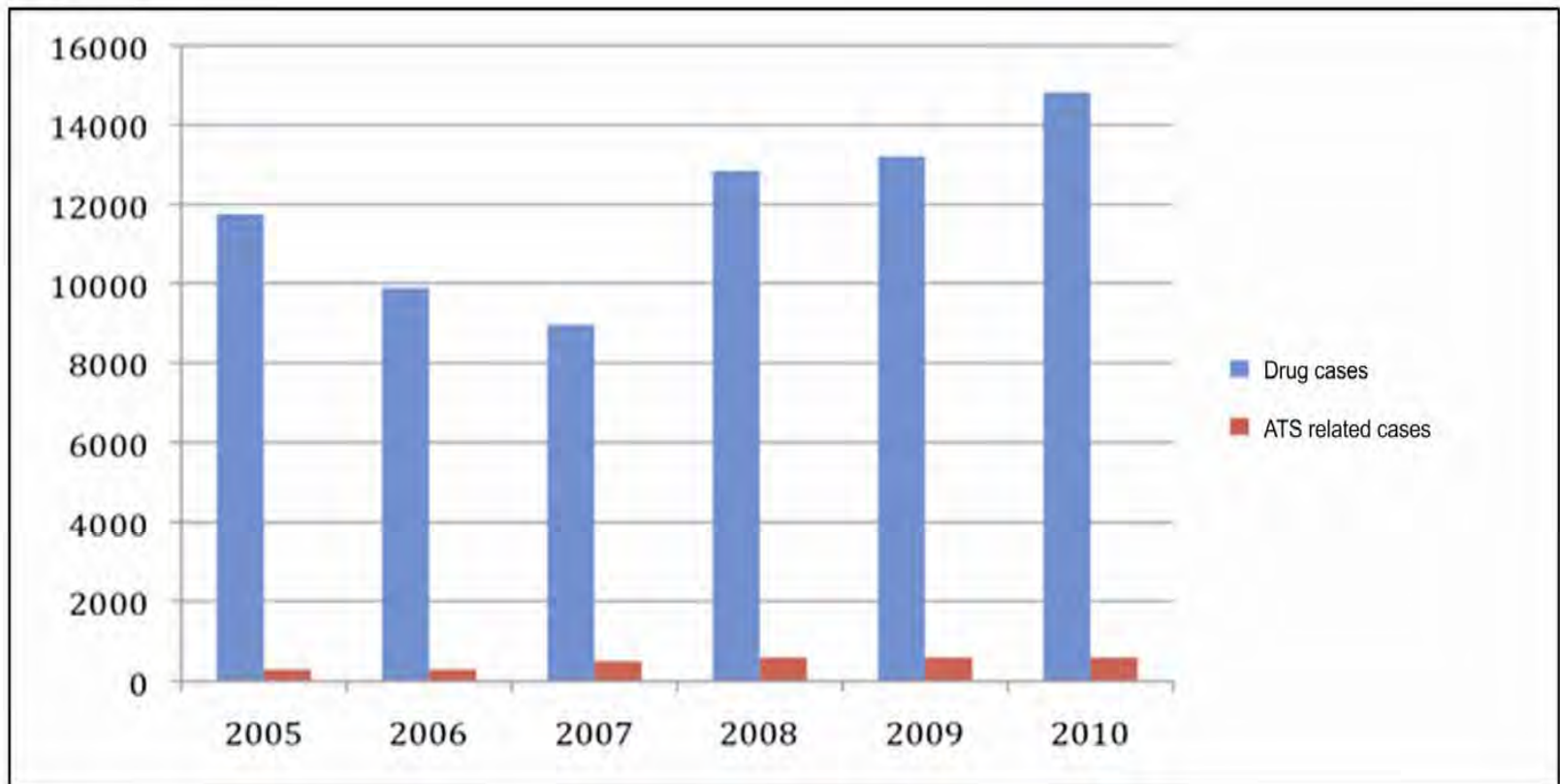


<sup>33</sup>Support for developing effective ATS prevention strategies and measures for East Asia: A Pilot in Viet Nam (2006-2011)

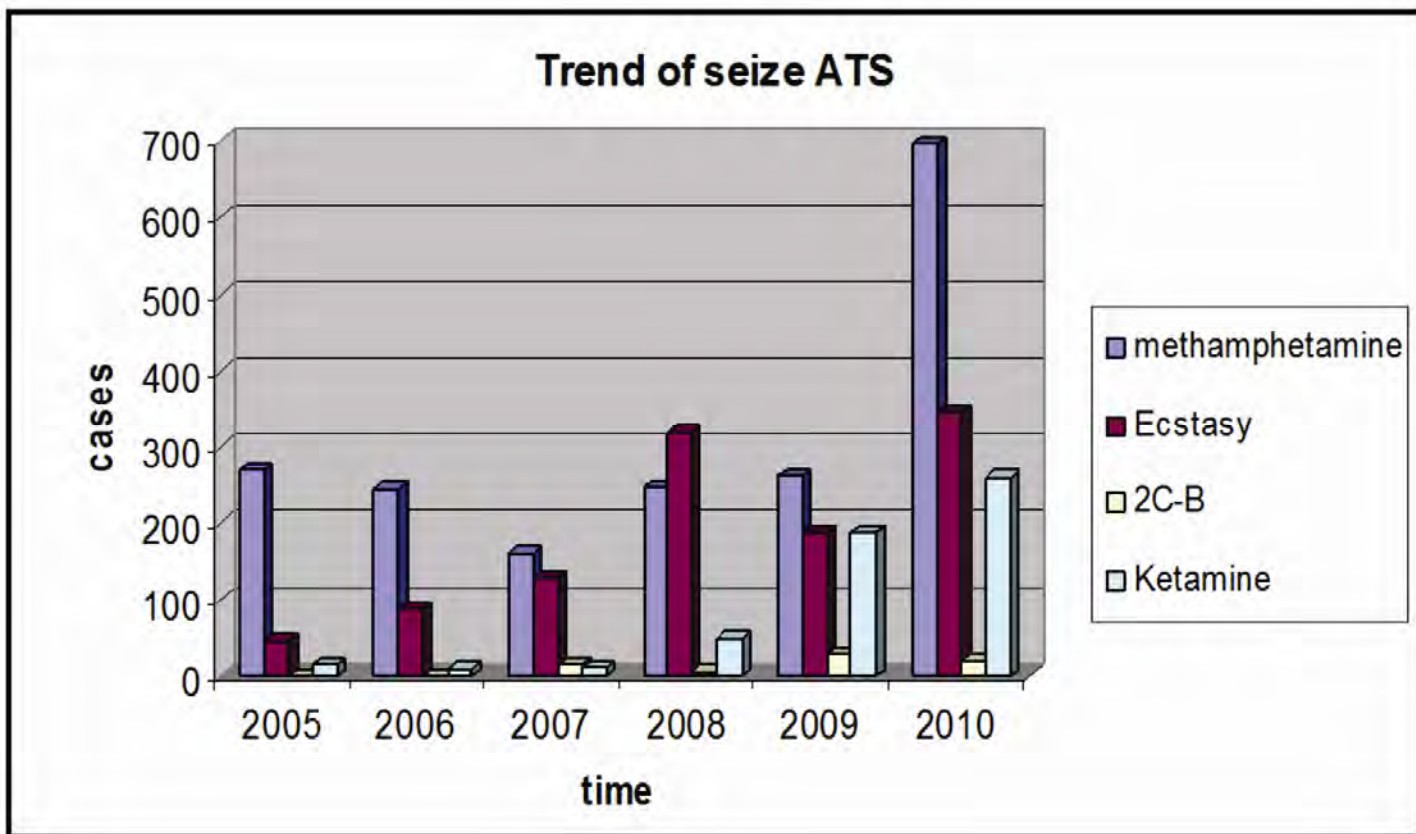
# ATS forensic analysis

PHOTO	COMPOSITION	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (mg/tab)	PHOTO	COMPOSITION	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (mg/tab)
	MA	6,033x3,146	116		MDMA	8,064 x 5,409	269,6
	MA, Cafein	6,079 x 3,250	91,18		MDMA	8,139 x 4,784	270
	MA	6,014 x 2,731	103		MDMA, Cafein	8,319 x 4,886	240,7
	MA	8,075 x 4,000	191,4		MDMA		

# ATS related cases



# ATS cases types between 2005 - 2010



# Key Informant interviews

1/ Ward Police

2/ Emergency / Hospital

3/ Bar / nightclub owners/manager



# Section B – Awareness survey among school and university students in 5 cities

## SECTION B

### AWARENESS AND PREVALENCE OF USE OF ATS AMONG SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN 5 CITIES IN VIET NAM

The primary objective of the second component of this survey was to assess the general awareness, familiarity and prevalence of use of ATS among school and university students from 5 cities in Viet Nam. The information generated from the school and university survey will assist in developing appropriate strategies that can deliver the necessary information and skills to young people across Viet Nam in order to make better informed decisions including preventing ATS use and reducing the harm associated with ATS use. The main findings related to this section include:

- School and University students are very aware of ATS, having learned about ATS either through the media, Government campaigns or from their friends.
- Despite having heard of ATS, the majority of students could not really explain the difference between the various types of ATS indicating actual familiarity and understanding of ATS very low.
- Participants felt that ATS was increasingly available within their communities and that many people in their communities used ATS.
- While students thought availability and use was high within their communities, reported prevalence of life time use of the various types of ATS was around 1% indicating that use of ATS is very low across this cross section of school and university students in 5 cities and provinces in Viet Nam.

### Participants and Methods

The Centre for Consulting on Health and HIV/AIDS (Lamyer)'s Association were contracted for 93 project to conduct the surveys across 5 cities/province survey implementing team / day protocol training in Dec international consultant. The background study, ethical concerns relating to research projects including consent from survey participants.

The five biggest urban cities selected for the survey as both Viet Nam and indeed the data of this report suggest that ur ATS use is more prevalent. The selected were Ha Noi, Ho Chi Phong and Quang Ninh. Schools from each city were selected and recommendations with Education and Training at provincial and through discussions with I Security in each city and province.

A representative cluster sample each school and university. A class of each of year 10, year 11 and 1 from each school and a class of third year and fourth year were selected from each of five university. A formal request cooperation was sought from educational institution. This was the Department of Education and Training within UNODC Hanoi. Participants were selected from all potential students in the survey. A total number of 4,191 university students at the study.

### Data Collection and Instruments

To meet the aims of this section of the study, the project team developed a survey instrument that would assess the level of understanding, awareness and familiarity of school and university students with ATS in their social networks and communities. Some sections of the survey were based on previous research conducted in South East Asia while other sections were developed specifically for this study in the Vietnamese context. The survey was designed by members of the project team from SODC and UNODC and finalised in English first then translated into Vietnamese and checked for accuracy by a project team member who was bilingual in both English and Vietnamese languages. The survey was made up of five specific sections and focused on the following key themes:

- Background demographics and socio-economic circumstances of participant;
- The participants' level of knowledge, familiarity and understanding of different types of ATS in Viet Nam;
- Participants' perceptions and awareness of the availability and use of ATS in among their social networks and in their communities;
- History of use of ATS among participants;
- Participants' attitudes and perceptions towards ATS use, ATS users, the reasons why people use ATS and their ideas to prevent ATS use in their communities.

### Data Analysis

Data from school students and university students was double entered into a Microsoft Access programme developed by an programme designer based in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The complete school and university data sets were then sent to an experienced data analyst who cleaned the data set and sought clarification for any missing or unexplained data. Data was then cleaned again and analysed. For the purposes of this section and this report, data was invariably and descriptively analysed. Findings from the analysis are presented in order to respond to the main objectives of this section of the study.

## RESULTS

### A. Participant Demographics

Table 2.1: Description of participants

SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY	
CHARACTERISTICS	
SEX	Male
	Female
	TOTAL
AGE	Mean
	Median
CURRENT RELATIONSHIP STATUS	Single
	Married
	Divorced
	Widow
	Widower
	Other
WHERE DO THEY LIVE	Parent's
	Balance
	Rented
	School
	University
	Other
TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME	<= 5 mil
	5-10 mil
	> 10 mil
	None
TOTAL MONTHLY SPENDING	<= 5 mil
	5-10 mil
	> 10 mil
	None

In this cross section schools and universities attempted to draw young school and Viet Nam. The size of the student group from 14 schools at universities. The gender recruited into the (males 46.3%) are essentially ideas are single (87% of university students) of participants represented approximately 10% of university reported being male.

students reported being married. School students were more likely to live with their parents than university students (84.5% versus 21.2%) indicating that students attending university tend to move out of the family home. University students tend to live in shared apartments (35.8%) or in university dormitories (34.5%). The majority of students are either earning less than 5 million VND per month or not earning any money at all (79% of university students) indicating that students rely on financial support from families during their education.

### B. Knowledge, Familiarity and Understanding of different types of ATS

In this section of the survey, students were asked a series of questions to ascertain their general knowledge about ATS and whether they could distinguish between different types of ATS. Students were also asked where they had heard about ATS from and how prevalent they thought ATS was in their communities. Students were also asked a series of questions that assessed their knowledge about the physiological and psychological effects of ATS.

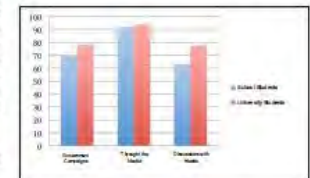


Photo: Drug advocacy campaign among students

### Awareness of methamphetamine tablets, Ecstasy or Ice among students

School and University students were asked if they had ever heard of the three main types of ATS that are available and used in Viet Nam: methamphetamine tablets, Ecstasy or Ice. The majority of school and university students had heard of Ecstasy (92% for both school and university students) and almost two thirds of school and university students surveyed had heard of methamphetamine tablets (60% and 77% respectively) and Ice.

Graph 2.2: Percentage of students from school and university who have ever heard of ATS



The Government of Viet Nam uses anti drug propaganda as one of its main activities to raise awareness about illicit drugs in Viet Nam. For example, on June 26 every year the Government of Viet Nam holds a meeting to acknowledge World Drug Day, June is also the National Month against Drugs. Furthermore, the Government of Viet Nam utilizes mass communication and media agencies to work closely with the Standing Office on Drugs and Crime to produce and highlight anti-drug activities. The anti-drug propaganda is underpinned by the Viet Nam's 'prevention is first' priority to anti-drug messages. The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism and the Ministry of Public Security collaborate to ensure that messages are tailored to specific sectors of society so that all of society is ultimately receiving anti-drug education.



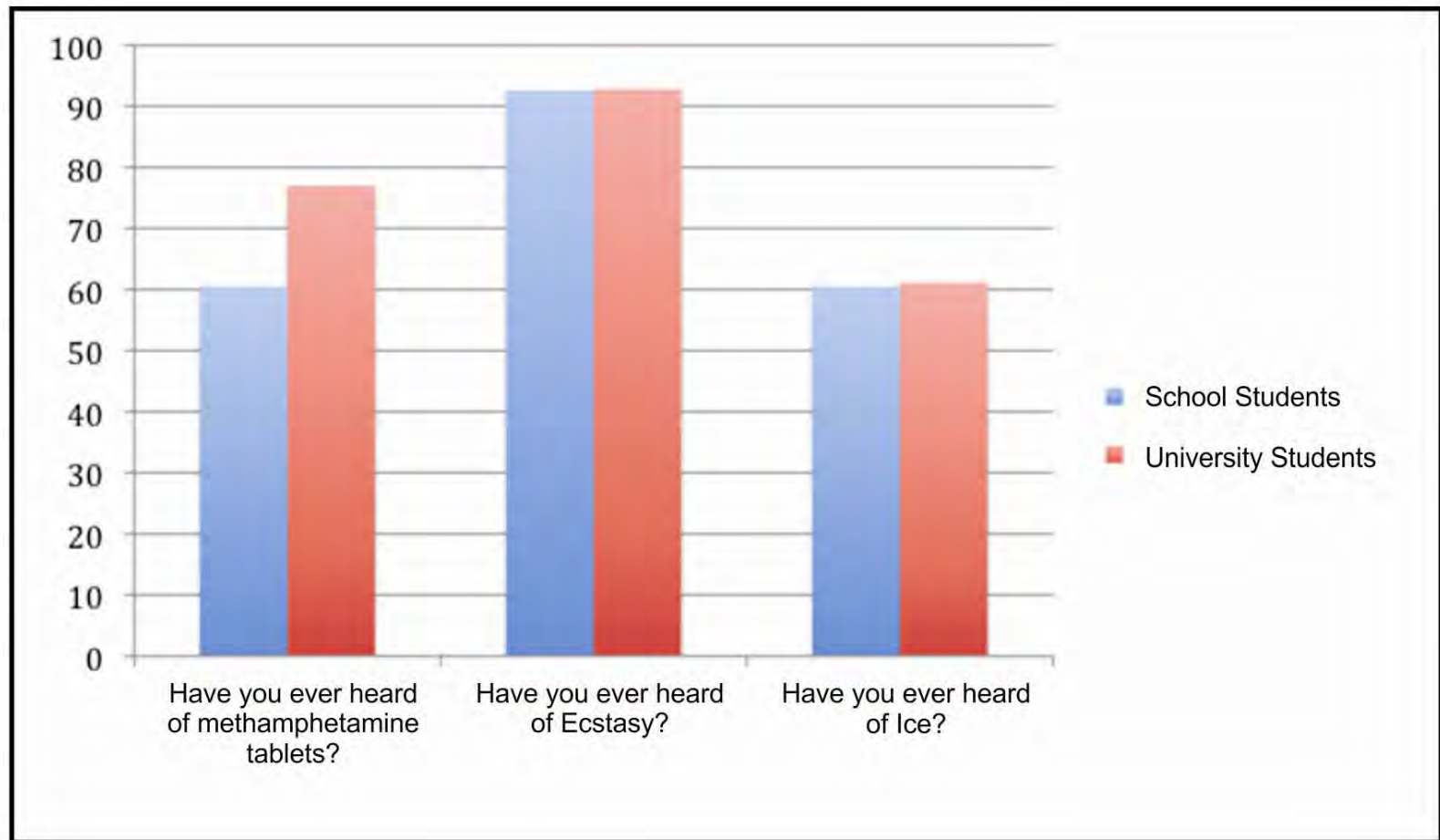
Photo: Drug advocacy campaign among school students

School based drug prevention is considered a critical component of the National Target Drug Control Programme and the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Public Security work closely together on the inter-ministerial drug control plan organising many different events. These events range from mass student signing ceremonies where students show their commitment to not use or sell drugs, the promotion of groups of self protection

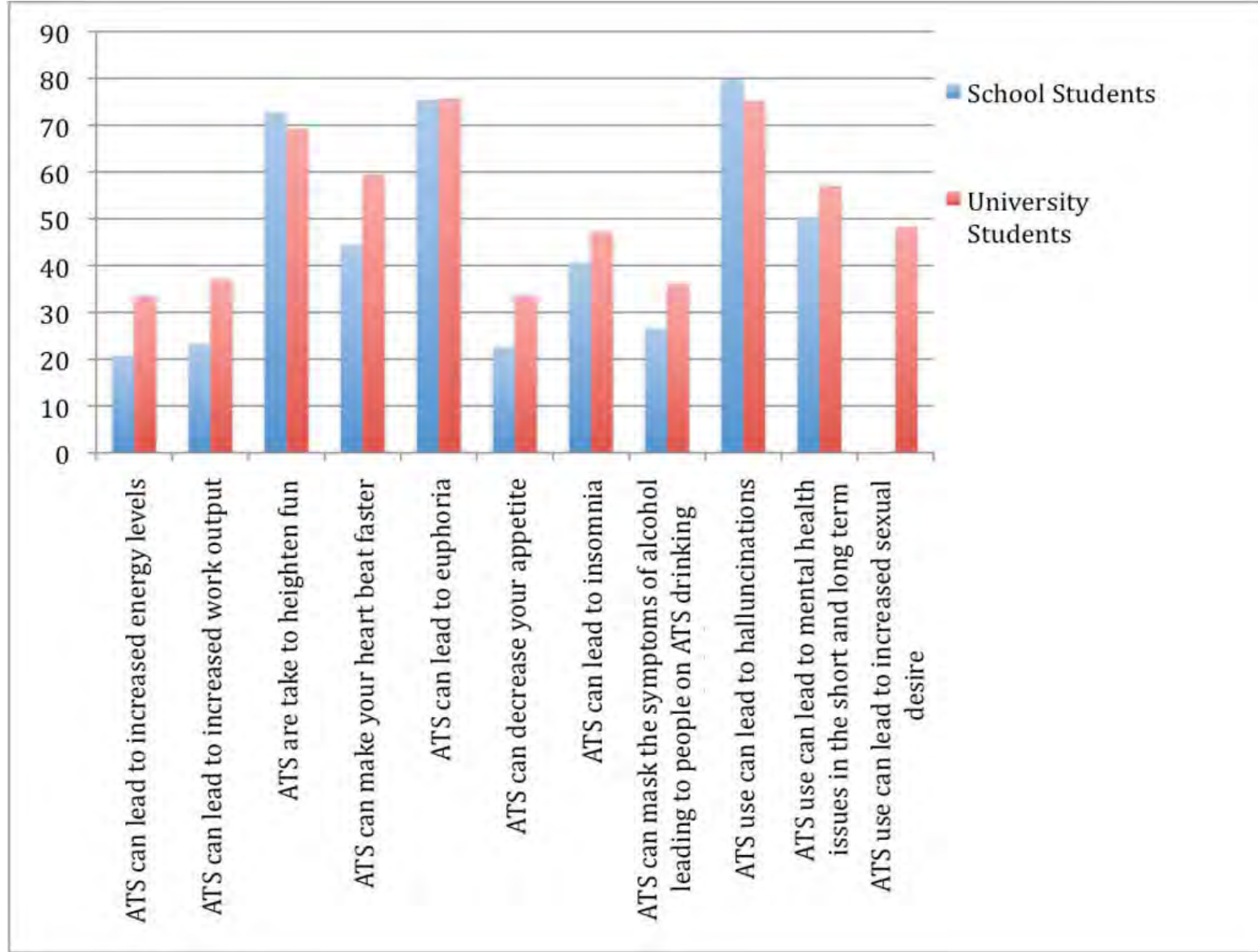
50 Many Governments, UN agencies, institutes have a strict set of guidelines human subjects who participate in cover such important issues as doing good clinical practice. Researchers were trained at the basics of prior addition, risk assessment and approval Review Board of Hanoi Medical University.



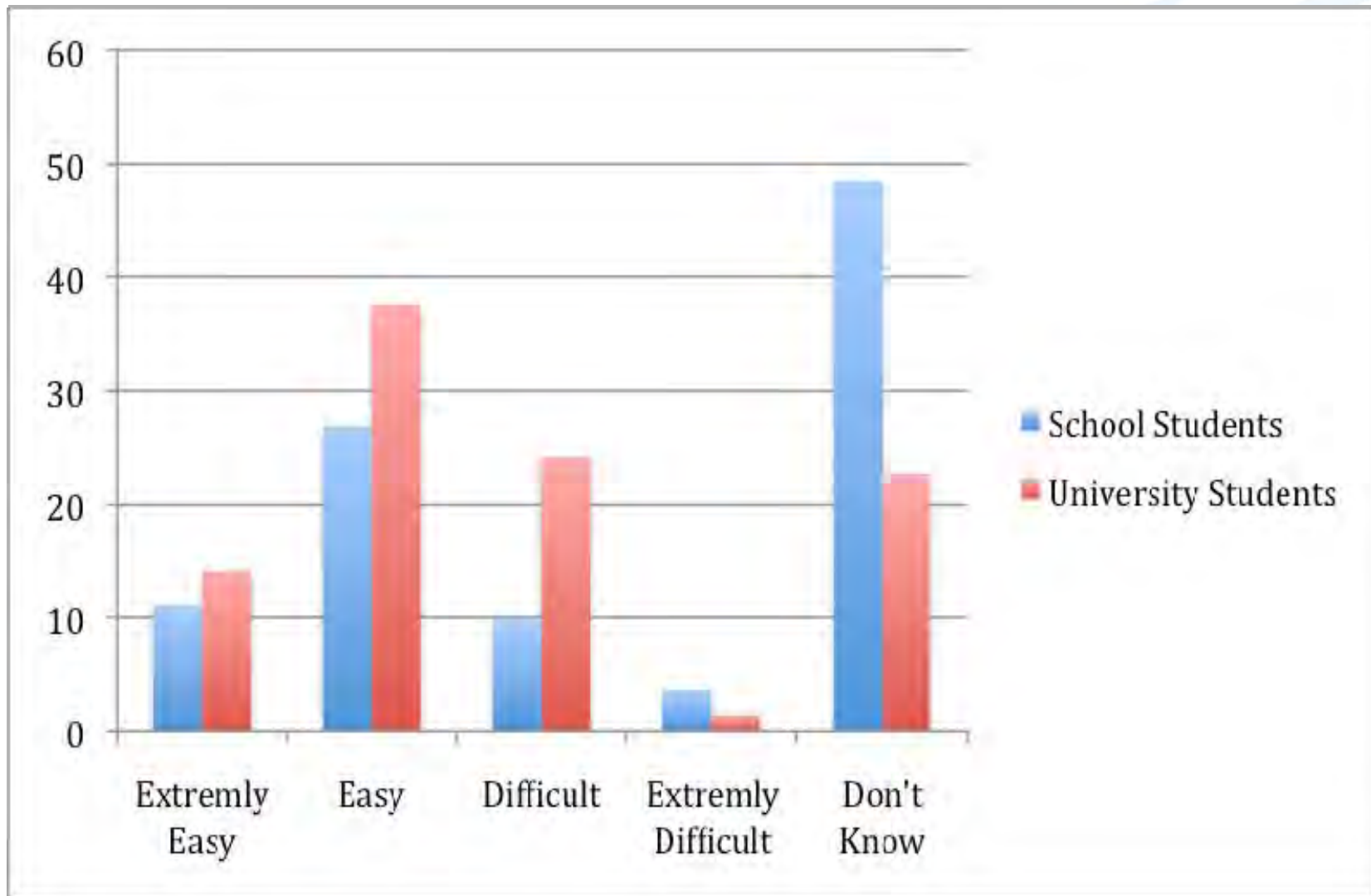
# Percentage of students from school and university who have ever heard of ATS?



# Affects of ATS?



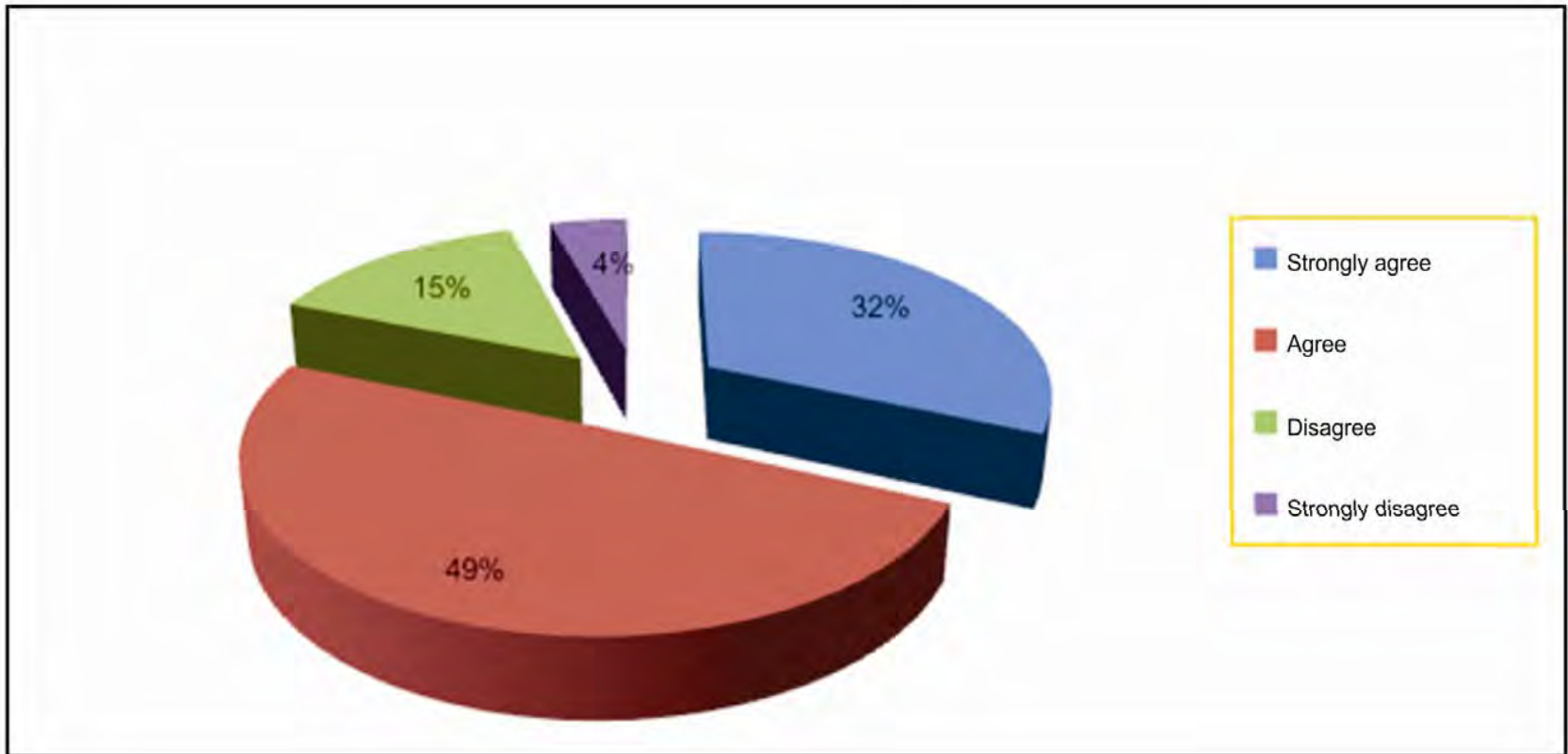
# Perception of ATS availability in the community



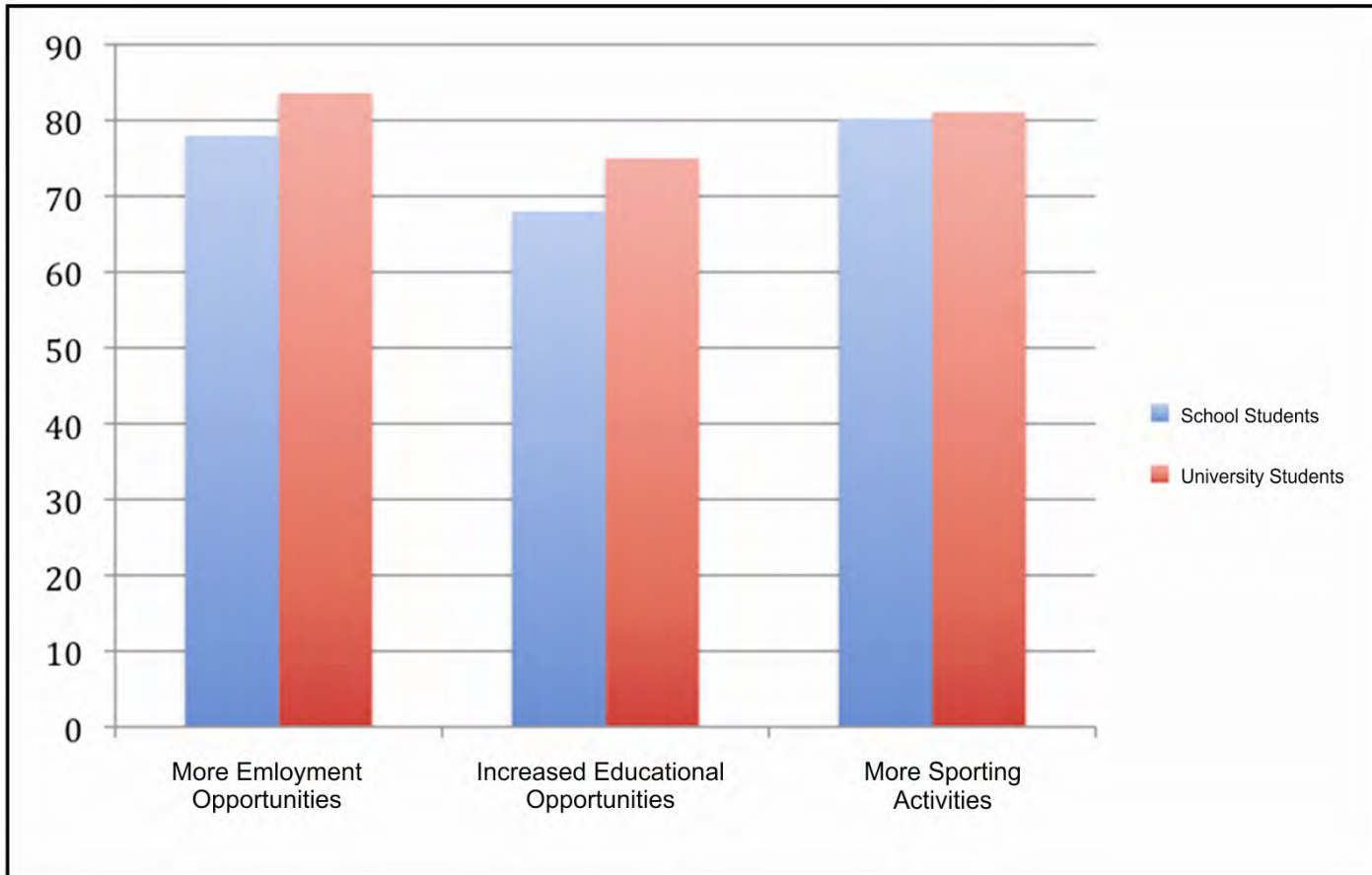
# Reported ATS use by students is VERY low

Reported use of different ATS	School students		University Student	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Methamphetamine tablets</b>	57	1	36	0.9
<b>Ecstasy</b>	92	1.6	28	0.7
<b>Ice</b>	65	1.1	18	0.4

# Provision of ATS information in the community?



# What specifically would help protect communities against ATS?



# Section C - ATS awareness, use and potential implications for individual and public health

## SECTION C

### ATS AWARENESS, USE AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH AMONG SELECTED RISK GROUPS IN VIET NAM

This section of the assessment explored ATS familiarity and use among various groups considered high risk for the use of ATS. Using a targeted sampling method, we explored the awareness and prevalence of ATS use among people who use drugs (PWUDs), men who have sex with men (MSM), female sex workers (FSW), taxi and construction workers, specific ATS users (Ha Noi only) and bar and nightclub goers across three cities in Viet Nam. The nightclub goers across three cities was to explore the implications of ATS use in selected groups so that in order to guide the reduction of harms of ATS could be considered to reduce the harms of ATS among these groups. The main findings from this section of the assessment include:

- Risk groups surveyed in this study had an overall high awareness and familiarity of ATS, especially Ecstasy and Ice.
- Risk groups showed a much higher understanding of the physical and psychological effects of ATS than the school and university students.
- The majority of participants across all risk groups acknowledged the role of ATS use in increasing sexual libido and desire, prolonging sexual activity and the role of ATS in sexual risk behaviour.
- Prevalence of Ecstasy and Ice among all risk groups was very high (80%) while the use of methamphetamine tablets was much less.
- The vast majority of participants reported only recreational use of ATS (a few times per month or occasionally over 3 months (70%) while a smaller percentage of participants reported using ATS weekly (20%).
- Participants reported that drug related arrest rates were high among their social networks indicating responses of law enforcement among these groups were common.
- Lifetime prevalence of sexually transmitted infections and sexual risk behaviour associated with ATS indicate that STIs and HIV acquisition remains an ongoing concern for many participants in these risk groups.
- Many participants reported that knowing

### Participants and Method

Between December 2010 : of researchers from the H (HMU) recruited participants groups in Viet Nam. In a team a methodology was this study section the bes ATS awareness, use and among risk groups in Viet was discussed and agreed the GOV and a review study team was assigne use and selective head ATS among the followo

- Heroin users
- Men who have sex with men
- Female Sex Workers
- ATS users (in Ha Noi)
- Taxi Drivers
- Bar Goers

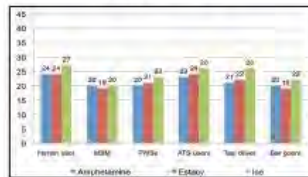
The three largest of Ho Chi Minh City the study site located university students.

### Justification for e

ATS use in the r Nam: ATS use among wealthy Viet Nam (Hanoi Da Nang). Then Viet Nam for su ATS use is unknown.

- Considering the study site, active ATS use had a serious impact on the health of participants and their social networks.
- Consistent with this, some high addition, where AT appears to

Graph 3.9: The average age of initiation of different types of ATS across different risk groups in Viet Nam



The above graph shows that participants in the survey began initiating ATS mainly between the ages of 20-23 years of age, although PWUDs appear to initiate ATS use slightly older than other groups at 24-27 years of age. In general, Ecstasy and Methamphetamine tablets are initiated at a younger age compared with the initiation of ICE.

Overwhelmingly, it appears that ATS use was initiated at the suggestion of other friends in their social network. While participants expressed that they used ATS because they were curious about ATS, it was their friends that satiated this curiosity by supplying them with ATS and encouraging them to use it. On average across all groups in all sites, 80% of participants reported that the first time they had used ATS, they were with their friends.

*The first time I used was when I joined my friends, they took me to a nightclub, and we saw people taking ecstasy, we tried it. At first I was not ready to take it but all of my friends took it and lured me to try... That day I was sad because of my family stuff, when I entered nightclub, I was still sad and drank alcohol with my friends. We danced until we were tired. My friend took it out and said it would help make feel stronger and no more tired, so I tried it (MSM Ha Noi)*

*In my context, I used ATS the first time when I was unemployed and sad. Friends invited me to join them taking ATS free of charge, and I joined them. (Male heroin user, Ho Chi Minh City)*

Generally, people reported using ATS the first time in small friendship groups of approximately 4-5 people, where the majority of the friends in the group were male. Across all groups, the first time people used ATS, it was very often supplied free of charge. Only FSWs in Da Nang reported that they had commonly bought it themselves (50%) which was much higher than any other risk groups in Da Nang and other

cities. FSWs also often reported that that they had used ATS the first time at the behest of one of their sexual partners who had encouraged them to use it. This was a common reported reason to use among FSWs in Da Nang (50%) and Ho Chi Minh City (23%) but not to the same extent as in Ha Noi (11%).

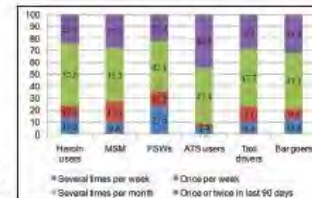
### Route of Administration of ATS upon Initiation

The first time people used ATS was generally either smoked, inhaled orally or orally ingested. Smoking ATS as the predominant form of administration for the first time use was reported by PWUDs (65%) and ATS users (69%) in Ha Noi, bar goers in Da Nang (100%) and taxi driver/construction workers (69%) in Ho Chi Minh City. MSM groups in Ha Noi (63%) and Da Nang (100%) were more likely to report orally ingesting ATS the first time, as were taxi drivers or construction workers in Da Nang (66%). A small percentage of heroin users in Ha Noi reported injecting ATS as the route of administration the first time they tried it.

### Frequency of use of ATS

Of participants, who reported using different types of ATS, the most common frequency of use was several times a month. Participants were asked to describe how often they used any type of ATS within the last 90 days and while there did appear to be a percentage of people who were reporting use several times a week or once a week, the most common frequency of use was a several times a month. This indicates that the use of ATS is primarily recreational rather than dependent use. Of participants reporting using Ecstasy, FSWs in Ho Chi Minh City (50%) reported the highest frequency of using several times a week, which was much higher than FSW in Ha Noi (11%) and Da Nang (10%).

Graph 3.10: Frequency of using Ecstasy the last 90 days



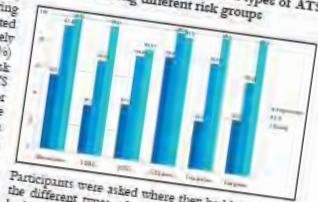
About 50% of participants, who reported actually using Ice, were also likely to mainly report using several times per month. This pattern of use was far more common than reporting use once a week

City	Heroin	Ecstasy	Amphetamine	Ice
Ha Noi	4.81	27.98	6.00	10.00
Da Nang	11.08	15.81	16.00	10.00
Ho Chi Minh City	4.53	11.00	34.00	10.00
FSW	28.50	5.05	16.00	10.00
MSM	1.00	10.00	27.00	10.00
Bar goers	7.43	8.50	10.00	10.00

Surprisingly, participants from all risk groups were on average much less likely to have heard of ATS in tablet form, although heroin users (55%) and ATS methamphetamine tablets was much lower across goes (40%).

The survey noted some widespread differences across several of the risk groups and indeed participants' awareness of methamphetamine tablets. For example, 97% of heroin users in Ha Noi had heard of this type, but only 14% of heroin users in Da Nang had heard of methamphetamine. Similarly, 61% of MSM in Ho Chi Minh City had heard of the methamphetamine in tablet form, only 3% on average very low awareness of Methamphetamine across all groups in Da Nang compared to risk groups in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Graph 3.3: Awareness of different types of ATS among different risk groups



Participants were asked where they had heard about the different types of ATS from, including if they had heard about different ATS from posters or signs in the school and government campaigns or in their if they had heard from their friends or in their to the school and university surveys. In contrast overwhelmingly reported that they had heard about methamphetamine tablets, Ecstasy and Ice from their peer group friends and networks. Over 90% of participants who had reported being aware of ATS had heard about it from their friends. This was consistent across all groups in all cities. Hearing reports accounted for between 30% and 50% of participants' awareness of ATS.

### Knowledge of the effects of ATS

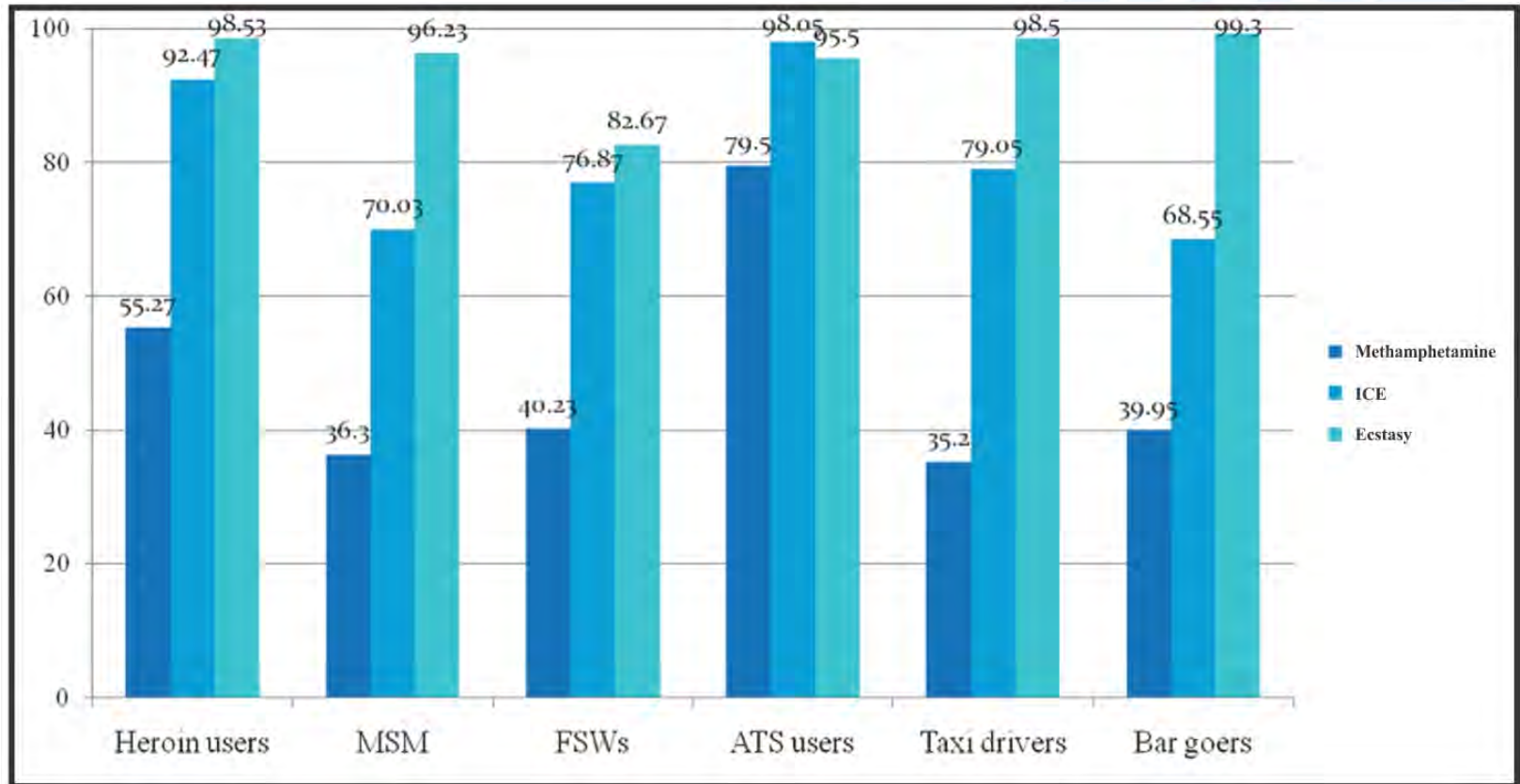
Participants were asked a series of questions related to their knowledge of the effects and/or characteristics of different types of ATS on the use. The survey gave a list of possible side effects and characteristics that may result from ATS use as described in the international literature. Participants were asked

## Total number of participants recruited from each risk group per city

<b>HIGH RISK GROUP</b>	<b>HANOI</b>	<b>DANANG</b>	<b>HCMC</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Heroin Users	100	70	101	271
MSM	100	70	100	270
FSWs	100	70	100	170
Taxi Drivers/Construction Workers	0	70	100	170
Bar Goers	0	70	100	170
ATS users (only in Ha Noi)	200	0	0	200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>1,351</b>



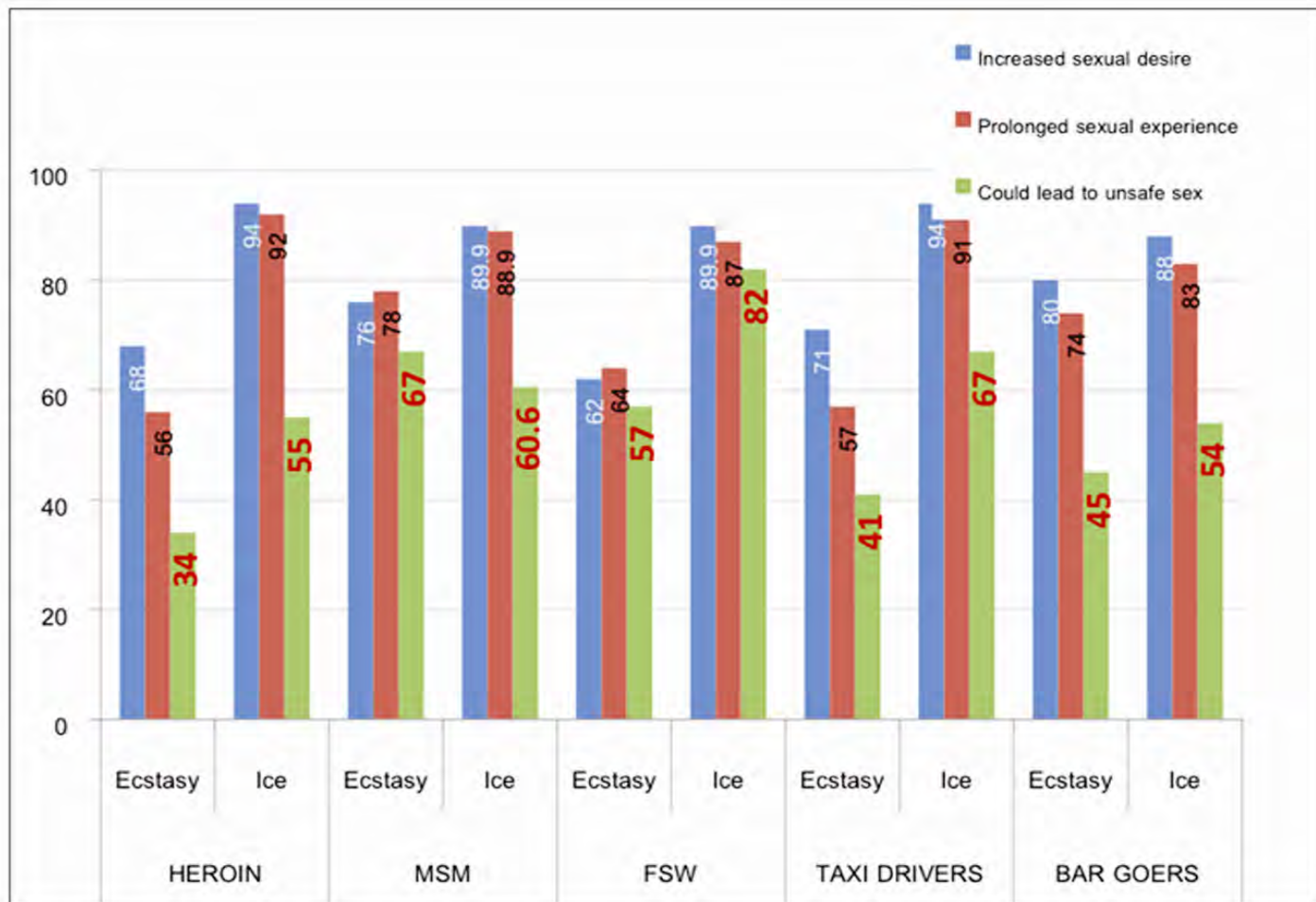
# Awareness of different types of ATS among different risk groups



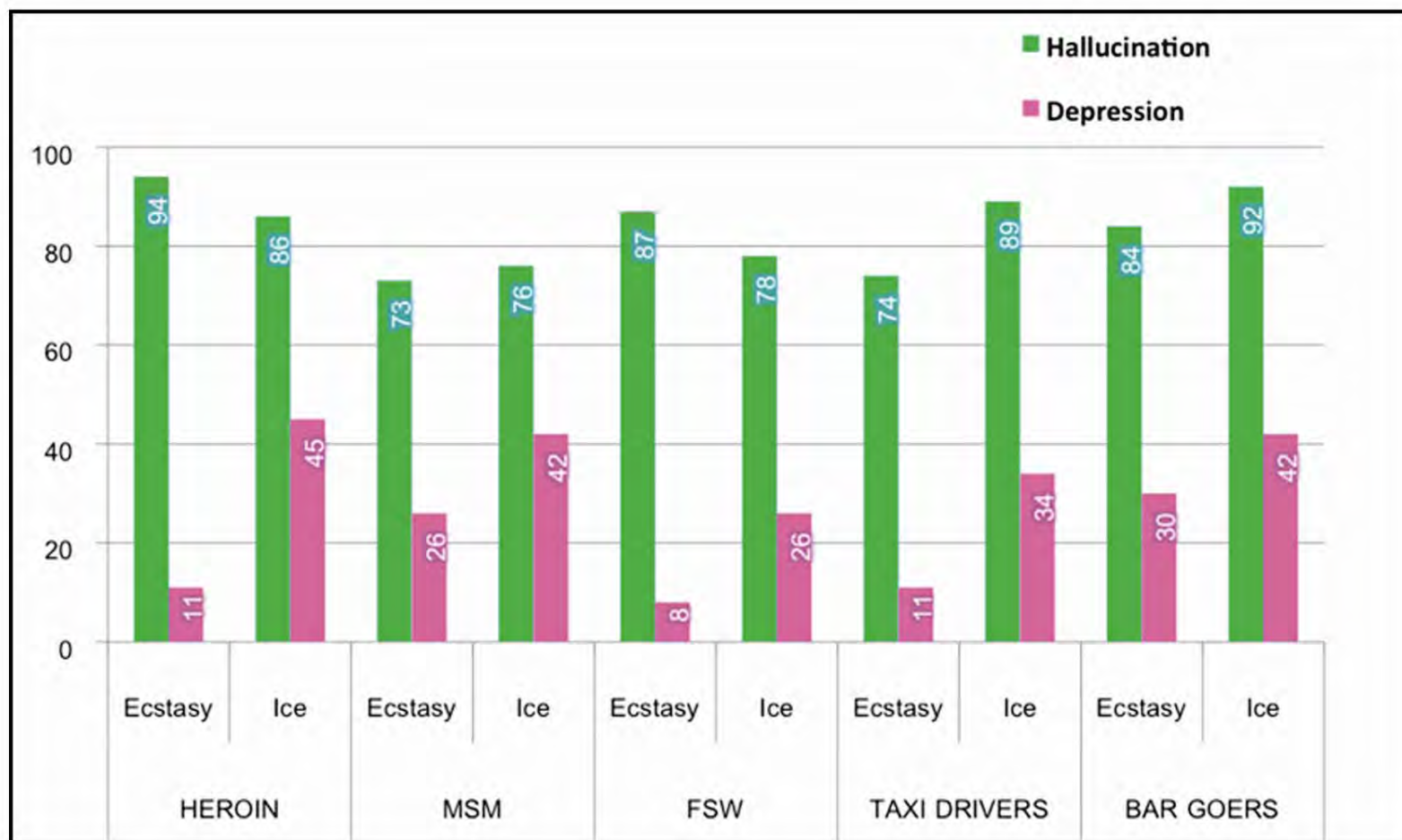
## Risk groups in Ha Noi knew the effects of Ecstasy

Effect of Ecstasy	Heroin User	MSM	FSW	ATS User
Increased Energy	84.8	91.4	73.9	83.8
Irregular heart beat	76.8	88.2	76.8	75.9
Hallucinations	79.8	92.5	89.9	94.8
Depression	27.3	50.5	34.8	38.2
Increased feeling of excitement	84.8	96.8	79.7	91.1
Increased sexual desire	63.6	87.1	75.4	75.9
Longer lasting sexual intercourse	81.8	79.6	71	73.3
Increased chance of sexual risk behaviour	53.5	75.3	42	40.8
Sleeplessness	68.7	77.4	69.6	70.2
Decrease appetite	66.7	72	62.3	72.3
Violent or uncontrolled behaviour	60.2	71	65.2	45.5

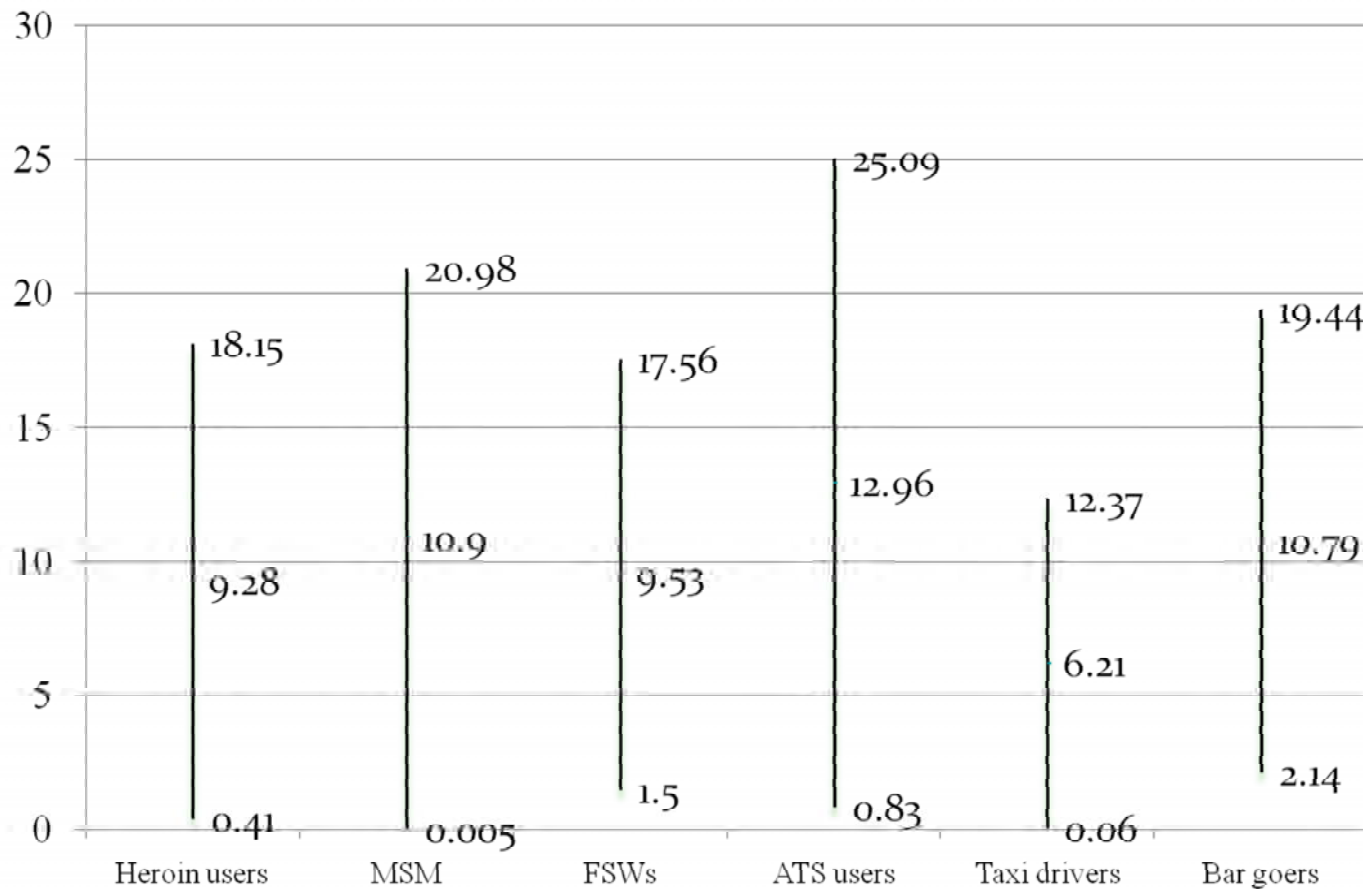
# Risk group in Ho Chi Minh City believed effects of Ecstasy or Ice on sexual desire, prolonged sexual experience and influence on unsafe sexual practices



# Risk groups in Da Nang believed Ecstasy use could lead to experiencing hallucinations or short or long term depression



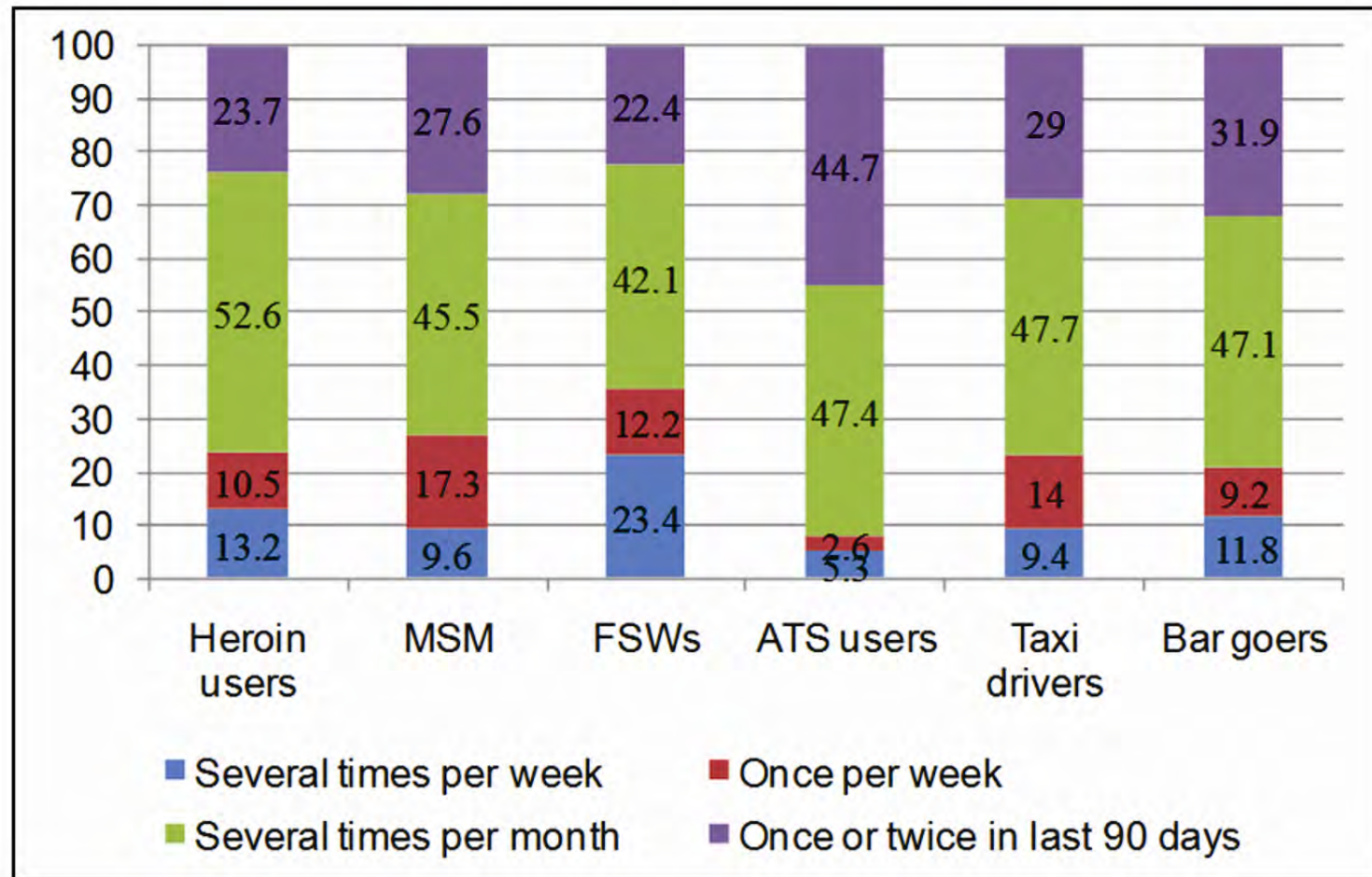
## The range and average number of ATS users that participants reported were in their social network



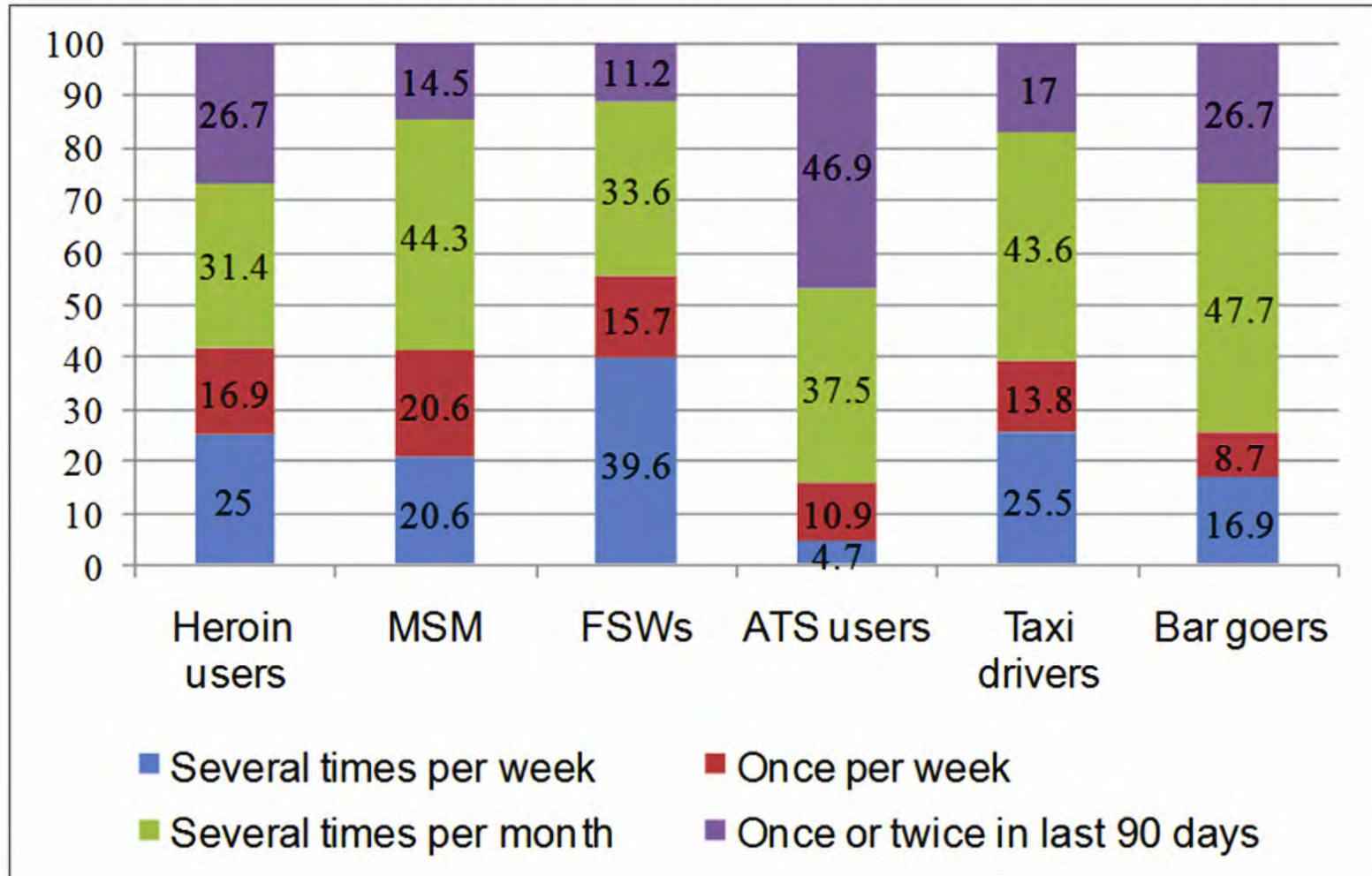
## Prevalence of ATS use (percentage) by type of ATS across different risk groups in Viet Nam

TYPE OF ATS	PWUDs	MSM	FSW	ATS users	Taxi Drivers or Construction Workers	Bar Goers
Methamphetamine tablets	28	10.7	21.4	47.5	17	22.4
Ecstasy	77	81.5	54.4	85.5	75	85.8
ICE	80.7	57.4	57.8	93.5	54	61.2

# Frequency of using Ecstasy in the last 90 days

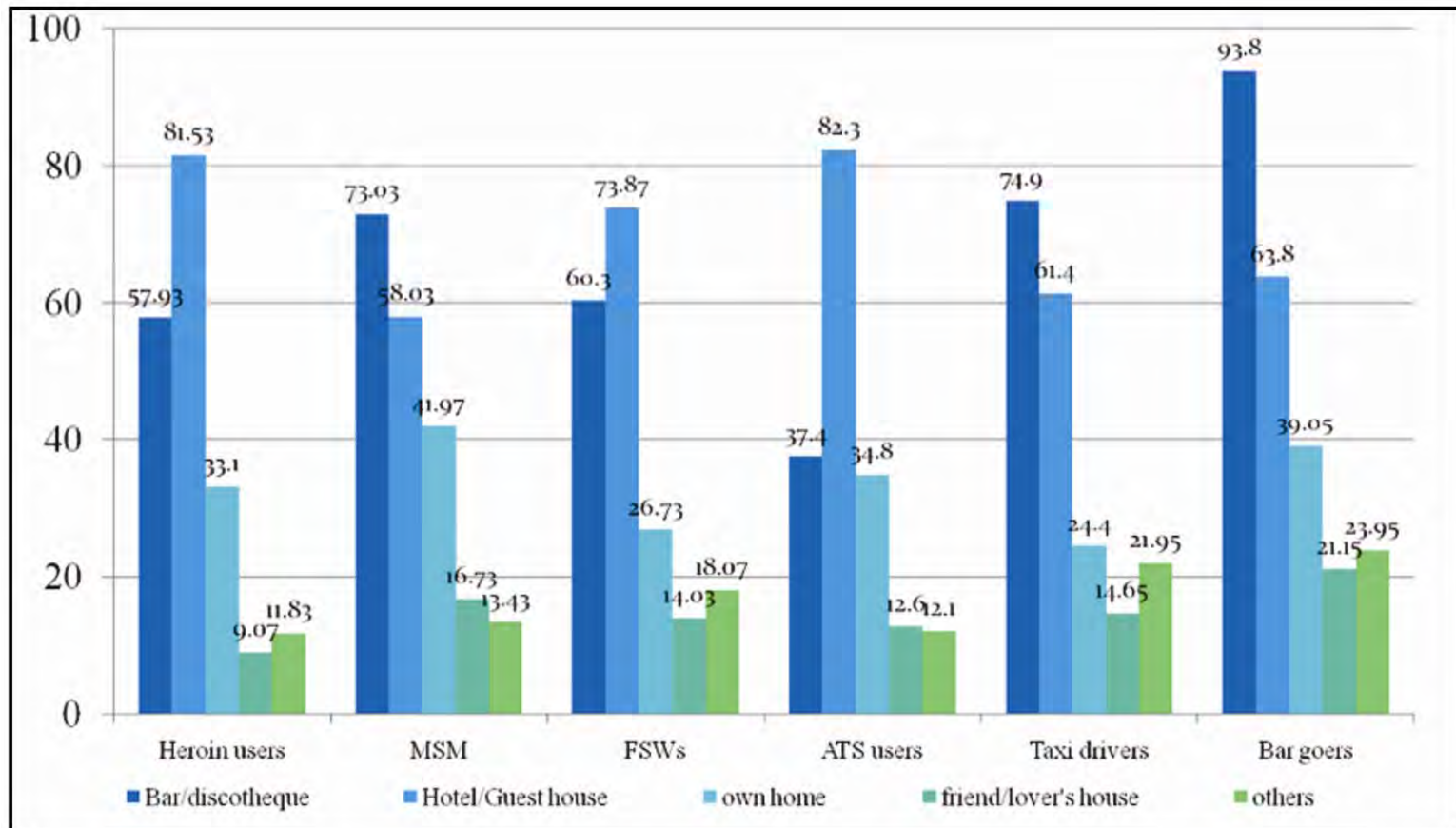


# Frequency of using Ice in the last 90 days





# Location of ATS use



## Knowledge and experience of ATS injection

- “I have not seen anyone injecting ecstasy, but I saw my friend injecting ice... he melted it into liquid and injected... I saw his vein when injecting... then he felt high” (Male, construction worker, Danang)
- “they melt ice in a glass box, let cool and inject it... heroin users like to inject whatever they want to try... methamphetamine is injectable but not ecstasy and ketamine”(Male, heroin user, Hanoi)

# Section D - Recommendations

## SECTION D

### CONCLUSIONS, NECESSARY COMPONENTS OF A FUTURE NATIONAL ATS STRATEGY FOR VIET NAM AND PILOT PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

The objective of this assessment was to conduct a thorough review of the situation relating to ATS availability and use in Viet Nam. This was done with a view to designing a pilot intervention programme aimed at preventing ATS use in Viet Nam. Given the scale of the work undertaken in this assessment and the significant findings related to ATS availability and use, this section of the assessment proposes components of a pilot intervention embedded in an overall National ATS Strategy for Viet Nam. While the availability and use of ATS are increasing in Viet Nam, the levels of use in the general youth population are not nearly as pervasive as has been seen in neighbouring GMS countries. Viet Nam is therefore in the enviable position of being able to systematically and pragmatically design an overall National ATS Strategy that is able to respond to the unique situation of ATS in Viet Nam.

When considering a response to ATS in Viet Nam, it is important to consider a multi-pronged approach. Law enforcement efforts need to be combined with school, university and community based prevention efforts as well as best practice therapeutic interventions and harm reduction efforts that can work with risk groups to reduce the harm associated with ATS including: reducing the use of ATS, reducing ATS related sexual risk behaviour and prevention of transition to injection of ATS. The following conclusions and recommendations are based on the findings from the assessment and also on the valuable lessons learned and experiences from other countries in the region. While the sum of these components, strategies and recommendations contributes to an overall National ATS Strategy, individual line items can be selected and piloted as part of the VNM/J93 activities.

#### Recommendations related to Government policies and legal frameworks required to respond to ATS issues in Viet Nam

1. The Government of Viet Nam needs to continue to monitor the patterns and trends of ATS availability and use through an ongoing monitoring mechanism. The monitoring of trends concerning ATS could be done in conjunction with the trends of all substance use in Viet Nam utilizing a National Household Survey method. In addition, the Government of Viet Nam would need to consider ongoing and more in depth assessment

of the prevalence and implications of ATS among high-risk groups.

In order to design and implement effective responses to ATS, it is important to have strong empirical data upon which to base interventions and indeed to evaluate any interventions. It is recommended that the Government of Viet Nam consider surveillance of patterns and trends of ATS in conjunction with patterns and trends of other substances. National Household Surveys are methods often employed to ascertain the prevalence of use of various substances<sup>53</sup>. Given that ATS use in Viet Nam appears to be very low among the general population, it is also recommended that any National surveillance efforts examine both licit and illicit substances and are combined with ongoing assessments of trends among high-risk groups utilizing similar methods as in section C of this assessment.

2. The Government of Viet Nam needs to review and revise its legal framework governing the importation and distribution of chemicals and products used for industrial, health (including pharmaceutical medicines) and scientific purposes that may be diverted for the illegal manufacture of ATS

It is clear that the Government of Viet Nam has begun the process of improving the ability of the relevant agencies to improve the regulation of the importation of precursor chemicals that can be diverted into the illicit production of ATS. It is vital that this work is continued and seeks to replicate best practice legal and regulatory standards in ensure that Viet Nam does not become either a primary producer of ATS or as a transit country for secondary distribution of precursor chemical that are diverted into illicit ATS production.

3. There is need for a set of specific regulations that provide guidelines for the law enforcement sector to enhance the prosecution of individuals involved in large scale manufacturing and trafficking of ATS

At this current stage, there are no clear guidelines that law enforcement officials can use to specifically prosecute individuals involved in the large scale manufacturing and trafficking of ATS. There are laws

<sup>53</sup> National Household Surveys examining substance use are periodic surveys done with the aim of estimating the number of people in a country population who use licit and illicit substances. National Household Surveys generally use multi-stage sampling methods that sample provinces, districts, communes, households to make a representative sample of a country's population aged between 12 and 64 years of age.

## Recommendations related to Government policies and legal frameworks required to respond to ATS issues in Viet Nam

# Section D - Recommendations

relating to illicit drug production but not specifically the manufacture of ATS.

4. A mechanism is required to be designed and implemented that strengthens cooperation, information sharing and enhances capacity across all law enforcement agencies in Viet Nam including police, forensics, customs officials, border army, maritime police in relation to detecting, investigating and seizing illicit ATS

It is important that a mechanism exists that can enhance the ability of Viet Nam's diverse law enforcement sector to share information relating to ATS detection, investigation, seizure and prosecution. For example, the chemical analysis of seized ATS needs to occur in a timely manner and findings from the analysis need to be circulated to other relevant agencies that can in turn use that information to improve intelligence and enhance investigations. The flow of information needs to be able to cross into different departments at different levels across all of Viet Nam in a timely manner.

5. A mechanism needs to be designed and implemented that enhances and facilitates cooperation between commune level law enforcement agencies and the health sector for the referral and management of acute clinical cases of ATS use into an equipped medical facility

This assessment has highlighted that there is currently no mechanism that allows for the collaboration between law enforcement agents and the health sector in response to ATS users who may be either suffering acute ATS related toxicity or experiencing some other physical or psychological issue. Such a mechanism is required so people who need medical attention can receive it in a timely manner and that street level law enforcement agents know that this mechanism exists so any medical emergency may be managed without being hindered by law enforcement procedures.

6. There is a need to design and implement standard operating procedures for the police, ambulance and emergency care staff for the management of acute cases of ATS use.

Police and health care workers are the most likely agencies to come into contact with ATS users who are exhibiting signs and symptoms of adverse reaction related to ATS. These people may be exhibiting behaviours that could be considered to be a physical danger to themselves and to others and/or they may be in need of acute medical care. Regardless,

the first priority in these instances is to protect the individual and the public and ensure safe and timely delivery of the person into medical care. In order to respond in this manner the police, ambulance and emergency staffs need to not only collaborate, but have a shared understanding of standard operating protocols. While each sector will require its own set of guidelines, it is imperative that they also have a shared understanding of each sector's role and how the best outcome can be achieved.

## Recommendations Related to Law Enforcement

### Supply Reduction

7. The Government of Viet Nam and its international partners should invest in strengthening capacity to improve supply reduction efforts in Viet Nam. Increased capacity needs to be built around the following:
  - The prevention of precursor chemical diversion;
  - Intelligence gathering, surveillance and monitoring of the trafficking of precursor chemicals used in ATS production and manufactured ATS from outside Viet Nam into Viet Nam;
  - Detecting, investigating and dismantling clandestine ATS manufacturing laboratories including the safe handling of precursor chemicals and equipment;
  - Appropriate handling of evidence.

Despite efforts to improve the interdiction efforts related to ATS trafficking into Viet Nam and with regards to the monitoring of precursors in and out of Viet Nam, the evidence suggests that the trend in both ATS availability and the movement of precursor chemicals is increasing. The reported success of the project AD/VIE/03/G55: Interdiction and Seizure Capacity Building with Special Emphasis on ATS and Precursors, should encourage the GOV to reinvigorate efforts and improve the capacity of its various law enforcement agencies; The Counter Narcotics Police Department and the Border Army and Maritime Police Forces. The movements of both precursor chemicals and manufactured ATS in and out of Viet Nam highlights the inter-connectedness of regional and indeed international trafficking and production of ATS.

## Recommendations related to Law Enforcement:

- Supply reduction;
- Police Training and Capacity Building.

# Section D - Recommendations

## Recommendations related to the Health Sector

The People's Police Academy should consider the development of protocol guidelines for how police not only manage ATS investigations but also manage ATS users, who may or may not be requiring hospitalization. Internationally, police are increasingly required to manage individuals, who are affected by ATS, especially those exhibiting signs of acute psycho-stimulant toxicity. These individuals may demonstrate a range of behavioural disturbances including aggression and violence and their ATS use can also lead to a number of serious physical complications. Medical intervention is the first priority for police response and usual police procedures should only be initiated after any medical complications have been stabilized. In combination and in collaboration with ambulance and hospital staff through the development of a shared standard operating protocol as suggested above, such guidelines would ensure that police officers are able to protect themselves, the public and the individual ATS user from harm associated with any negative side effects of ATS use<sup>55</sup>.

**10. Significant investments in training, equipment and staff capacity building of the Forensic Science Institute are required to enhance and improve the efficiency with which identification and chemical analysis of seized ATS and new chemicals that are being used to manufacture ATS.**

The Forensic Institute of Viet Nam has in the past years received some international support in the form of equipment and training to support the timely analysis of seized ATS<sup>56</sup>. Globally however there is a large increase in the number of precursor chemicals able to be used to produce ATS. Small changes in the molecular chemistry of various chemicals can enhance the ability of a growing number of chemicals being able to be used for ATS production. Being able to keep up with evolutions in chemicals used in the manufacture of ATS requires ongoing training and international information sharing for both the police of Viet Nam and the staff at the Forensic Institute of Viet Nam. The timely identification of new chemicals through sound analysis means responses across a range of sectors can be implemented more rapidly including banning or monitoring the importation and/or export of various chemicals that are being diverted into ATS manufacture.

**11. There is a need for improved cooperation between the Government of Viet Nam and its bilateral, sub regional, regional and international law enforcement partners to improve the law enforcement activities regarding ATS.**

To maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement activities around ATS, the GOV should expand its cooperation and collaboration with its bilateral, sub-regional, regional and international partners on illicit drug investigations. Furthermore, it should seek the assistance and the necessary training, equipment and capacity building from regional and international law enforcement agencies to build its capacity to detect, investigate and seize diverted precursor chemicals and manufactured ATS. Section A of this report highlighted several examples where bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation and intelligence has led to successful seizures of ATS and its precursors. This should encourage the GOV to increase its cooperation, intelligence and information sharing with bilateral, regional and international law enforcement counterparts.

International law enforcement agencies represented in Viet Nam continue to seek opportunities to collaborate with the GOV on a comprehensive range of national, sub-regional, regional and international law enforcement activities surrounding the investigation of production, trafficking and trade of illicit drugs.

### Recommendations related to the Health Sector

**12. The Government of Viet Nam needs to ensure that its health sector can respond to the needs of different types of ATS users. It will be important to improve capacity for the health sector so it can provide acute clinical management, clinical and community based psychosocial therapy and community based harm reduction responses in relation to ATS.**

The World Health Organisation recently released a technical brief on ATS that examines the full range of therapeutic interventions for users of ATS. The technical brief is a summation of internationally accepted principles of drug treatment, psychosocial treatment and community based harm reduction alternatives in the management of ATS. The brief notes that there is no evidence of effectiveness of compulsory drug treatment centres for the treatment or management for people who use ATS. The technical brief is evidenced based and reflects a public health perspective on the management of ATS in society. The brief also classifies ATS users into 3 classes: Occasional ATS users, Problem ATS

<sup>55</sup> For an example of best practice police guidelines see, "Psycho-stimulants – management of acute behavioural deteriorations, guidelines for police services". Available at: [www.sagepub.com/resources/press/first\\_steps/psychostimulants](http://www.sagepub.com/resources/press/first_steps/psychostimulants). Accessed on 21 July 2010

<sup>56</sup> The Struggle to Ban Precursors. (20 June, 2011). Insight: Organized Crime in the Americas. Available at <http://insightcrime.org/organized-crime-in-the-americas/item/1109-the-struggle-to-ban-precursor-chemicals>. Accessed on 20 July, 2011.

# Section D - Recommendations

## Recommendations for school and university based prevention activities

16. Develop appropriate educational and communication tools that can provide the relevant information, skills and understanding of ATS for different population groups in order to increase the primary prevention of ATS use across different populations in Viet Nam including school and the university students.

This assessment suggests that ATS use among young people within the school and university system in Viet Nam is actually very low, under 1%. Any educational and health promotion effort should be geared towards building the capacity of different populations to make informed decisions regarding drug use. At a school and university level, information and education around ATS should be incorporated into new or existing programmes and educational curriculums designed to increase knowledge, improve decision-making and reduce risk across a range of issues including substance use and sexual risk reduction. These programmes are more commonly termed, "life skills" programmes, and in many cases have become increasingly sophisticated around the world.

There are many considerations when selecting, designing or adapting school and university based programmes aimed at preventing initiation of substance use and significantly reducing the impact and morbidity associated with substance use. Characteristics associated with successful school-based programmes include:

- Linking health and education
- Ensuring programmes are aligned within existing health and education policies
- Built on work already being done by schools
- Build a strong and accessible framework and process that meets the needs of individual schools
- Has measurable outcomes<sup>61</sup>

This assessment showed that there was very little use of ATS among university students who participated in this assessment. There is little international literature on preventing substance use among

university students and further discussion is required to design and implement university based prevention activities in Viet Nam but similar common sense principles as described for school based populations should be adhered to.

## Recommendations related to Risk Groups: A Harm Reduction Approach

This assessment explored the prevalence and context of use of ATS among various risk groups in urban settings in Viet Nam. It is clear that the use of ATS is widespread among these risk groups. It is also important to acknowledge the particular implications of ATS use among various risk groups. For example, the use of ATS can lead to increases in libido<sup>62</sup> and therefore by association, increased sexual risk behaviour heightening the risk for HIV acquisition and other sexually transmitted infections; a pertinent issue for anyone sexually active but particularly high sexually active risk groups such as bar goers, sex workers and MSM.

The injection of ATS has been reported in Laos, Cambodia and Thailand<sup>63</sup> and indeed, this assessment suggests that ATS is being injected in Viet Nam. This carries significant implications for the spread of blood borne viruses and reinforces the need to take existing needle/syringe distribution programmes to scale.

This assessment recommends that as part of an overall National ATS Strategy that steps are taken to incorporate harm reduction approaches for ATS that can work within the existing harm reduction and service provision efforts already being implemented for risk groups in the context of HIV prevention and care. In addition, this assessment recommends that a health promotion and harm reduction strategy be implemented across a range of vocational sectors, particularly among the transport and construction industry, where ATS use is prevalent to not only reduce the harms, but also increase workplace safety.

Harm reduction and risk reduction interventions for individual ATS users should be aimed at minimizing the adverse consequences of ATS use, include peer-based approaches and be community-based. Some of the basic harm reduction approaches for ATS users include:

- Sexual and drug use risk reduction information, education and strategies to reduce

# Recommendations for school and university based prevention activities.

# Recommendations related to Risk Groups.

61. These recommendations for elements of successful programmes are based on an Australian example, "The Greenhouse Project", which has shown the potential to significantly reduce morbidity associated with alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances. Information is available at: [http://www.research.org.au/greenhouseproject/project/index.cfm?doc\\_id=174](http://www.research.org.au/greenhouseproject/project/index.cfm?doc_id=174). Accessed on 29 July, 2011.

62. Sherman, S., Giers, D., German, D et al (2008). A qualitative study of sexual behaviors among methamphetamine users in Chiang Mai, Thailand: a typology of risk. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, May, 27(3):263-269.

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# THANK YOU

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