

# Drug Use Situation in Dili and Bobonaro Districts.

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# Current situation

- In January 2012, Fundasaun Timor Hari'i (FTH) signed a new agreement with MoH, the PR of the GFATM Round 10 HIV grant to introduce a new drug use and harm reduction program.
- There's still limited data available about IDUs in Timor-Leste to use as a basis to design effective programme interventions.

# Background of the Problem

- There is no National Drug Policy in Timor-Leste that deals with illicit drugs and their use.
- In 2011, UNFPA conducted a study about drug use in Timor-Leste.
- There was 'some' injecting drug use (estimated 25-50 people) presumably taking heroin.
- a 'sizeable' number of young people both male and female using MDMA (ecstasy) and other amphetamine-type substances (ATS).

# Background to Problem cont.

- October and November 2012, the police had captured four people who were also engaged in drug trafficking.
- On January, 8<sup>th</sup> 2013, PNTL captured five people for using drug called "Sabu-sabu" in Santa Cruz, nearby Democracy soccer field, in Dili.
- February 2013 FTH commissioned the Rapid Assessment and Response (RAR) to investigate further the injecting drug use in two selected districts of Dili and Bobonaro in Timor-Leste.

# Objectives

1. To assess the nature and extent of Injecting Drug Use in Dili and Bobonaro districts.
2. To identify the types of drugs used , characteristics and locations of Drug Users in Dili and Bobonaro Districts.
3. To assess the risky behaviours associated with drug users leading to HIV infection and Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs).
4. To make recommendations for effective programme interventions and design appropriate behavior change and advocacy strategies.

# Methodology

- Duration: February -May 2013
- Location of the research: Dili and Bobonaro Districts
- The type of research was descriptive
- Population of study: Injecting and drug users
- Instruments and data collection techniques
  - Drug user's structured questionnaire
  - Focus Group Discussions (FGD) guide
  - Key Informant Interview guide
  - Observation checklist
- Literature Review

# Sampling Size & Recruitment.

Snowball sampling was used to recruit respondents. With this method, the researchers worked with current and former drug users and key informants to generate as many primary points of contact as they could within the drug-using population.

- 44 drug users were interviewed:
  - 19 were IDUs, and
  - 25 were non-injecting drug users.

# Key information that was explored

- Demographic characteristics of drug users
- Nature of drug use and types of drugs used
- The associated risky behaviours that exposes them to HIV transmission
- Existing services for IDUs
- Drug user's level of knowledge on HIV and AIDS.



# Recruitment and Procedure

- Core rapid assessment team:
  - Principle Investigator (HIV Prevention and Harm Reduction Specialist)
  - Researcher
  - 6 Field Research Assistants.
- Field Research Assistants training was provided before commencing the research.
- A Technical Advisory Group was formed to support the entire process of the assessment.

# Ethical Considerations

- Ethical approval was requested from the Human Research Ethics Committee Cabinet of the Ministry of Health, Timor-Leste.
- Individual participation was voluntary, and they could redraw at any time.
- Respondents received full verbal explanation of the objectives of the study, and their consent obtained before interviews

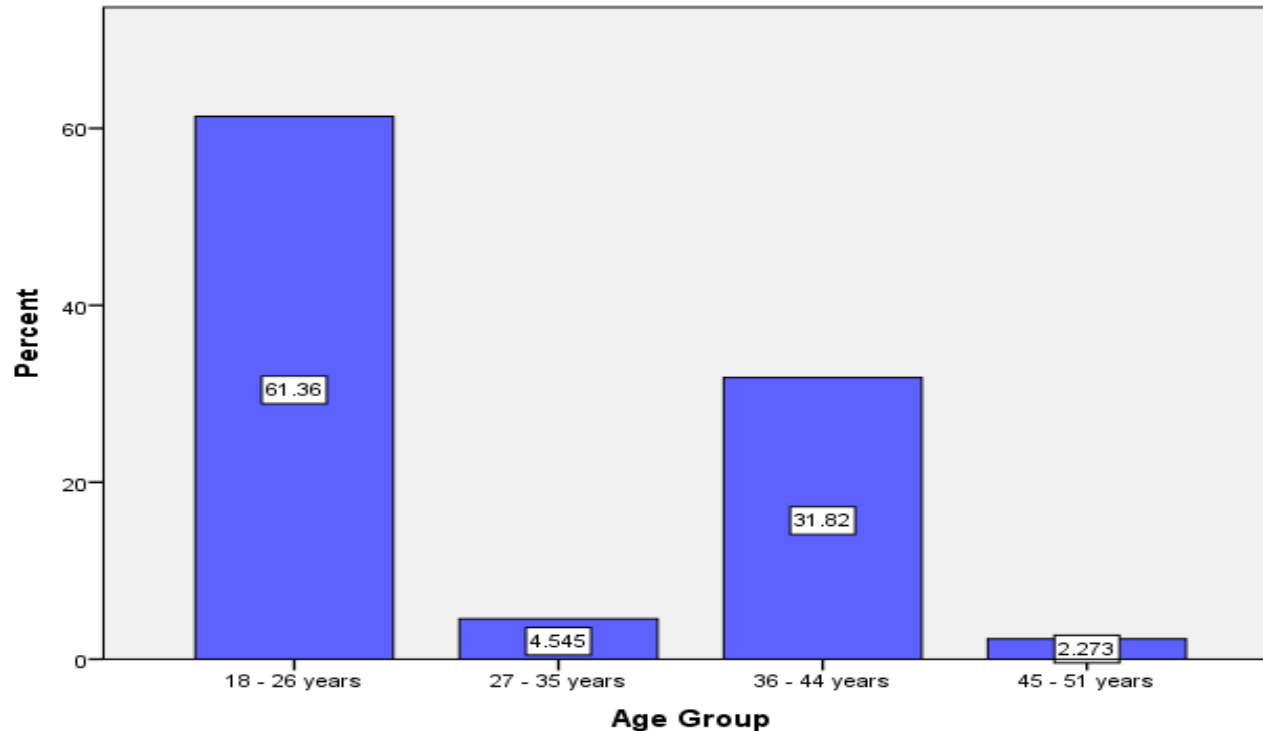
# Challenges and barriers encountered during the study

- IDU are very hidden and difficult to recruit.
- Some of the drug users could not disclose the types of drugs injected since they claimed that they got them from friends.
- Some drug users kept on postponing the appointments to meet with the research team and this made the planned field working dates longer than planned.
- The assessment team could not succeed getting authorization to access the prison to reach the eight drug user suspects for possible interviews.

# Findings: Characteristics of Drug Users

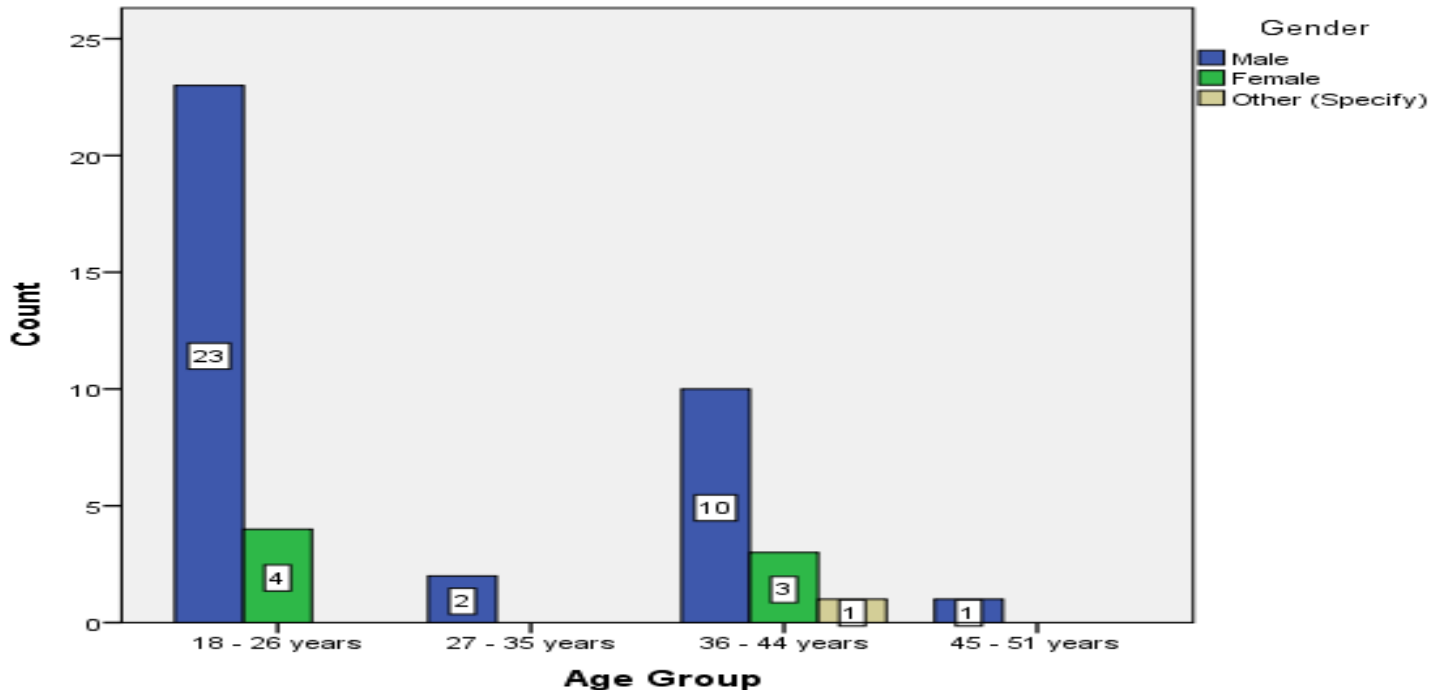
Category of Respondents	# of Respondents in Dili District	# of Respondents in Bobonaro District	Total	Percentage
Injecting drug users (IDUs)	17	02	19	43 %
Non-Injecting Drug Users	15	10	25	57%
Total	32	12	44	100%

# Age Group of Respondents



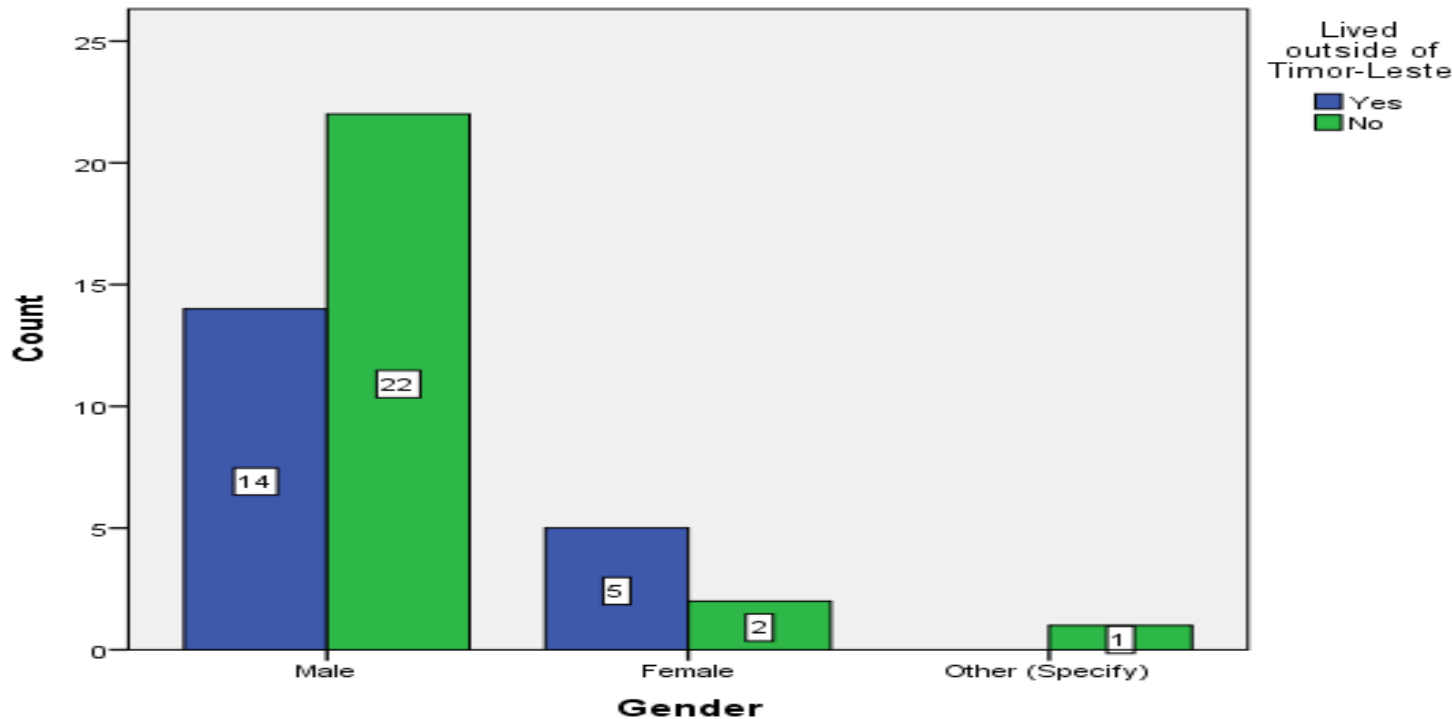
- The highest percentage of the drug users were young people, with 61% of respondents aged between 18 and 26 years.

# Age and gender of respondents



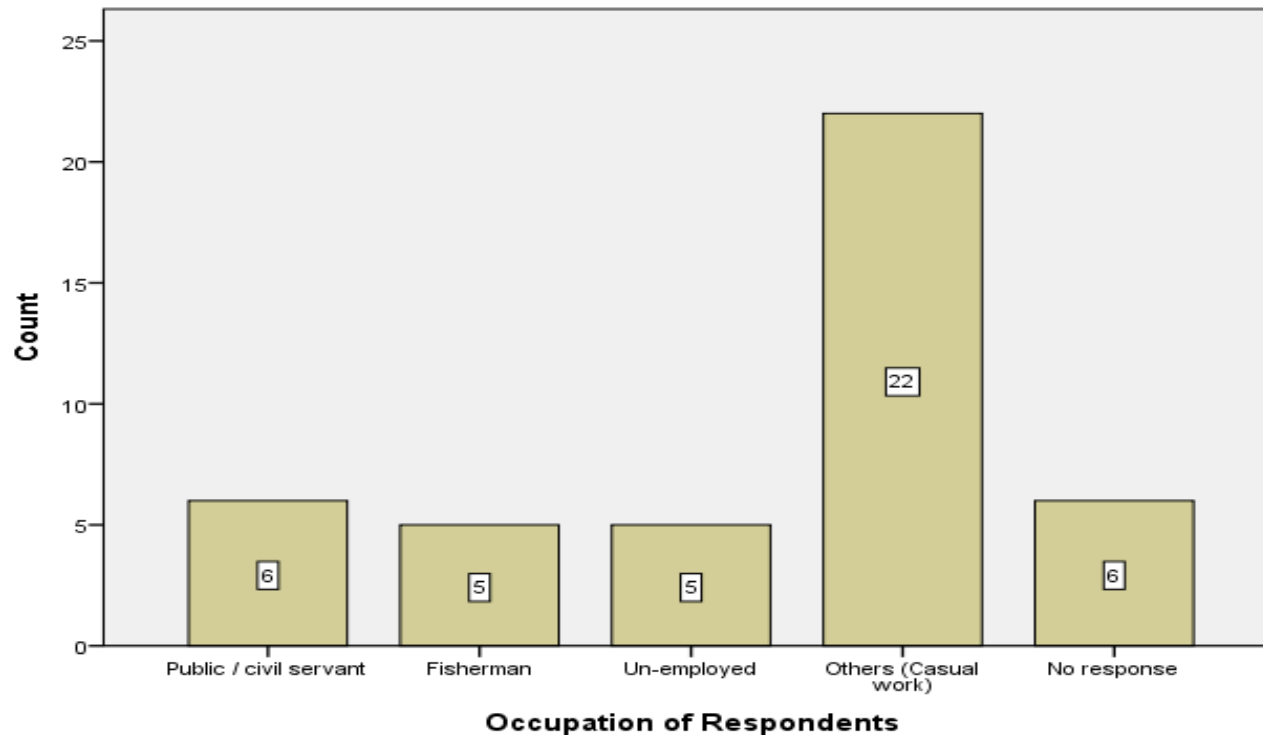
- The gender comparison shows males aged 18-26 as the highest drug users followed by males aged 36 to 44.

# Ever Lived outside Timor-Leste



- Less than a half of the drug users (43.2%) both male and female had ever lived outside Timor-Leste.

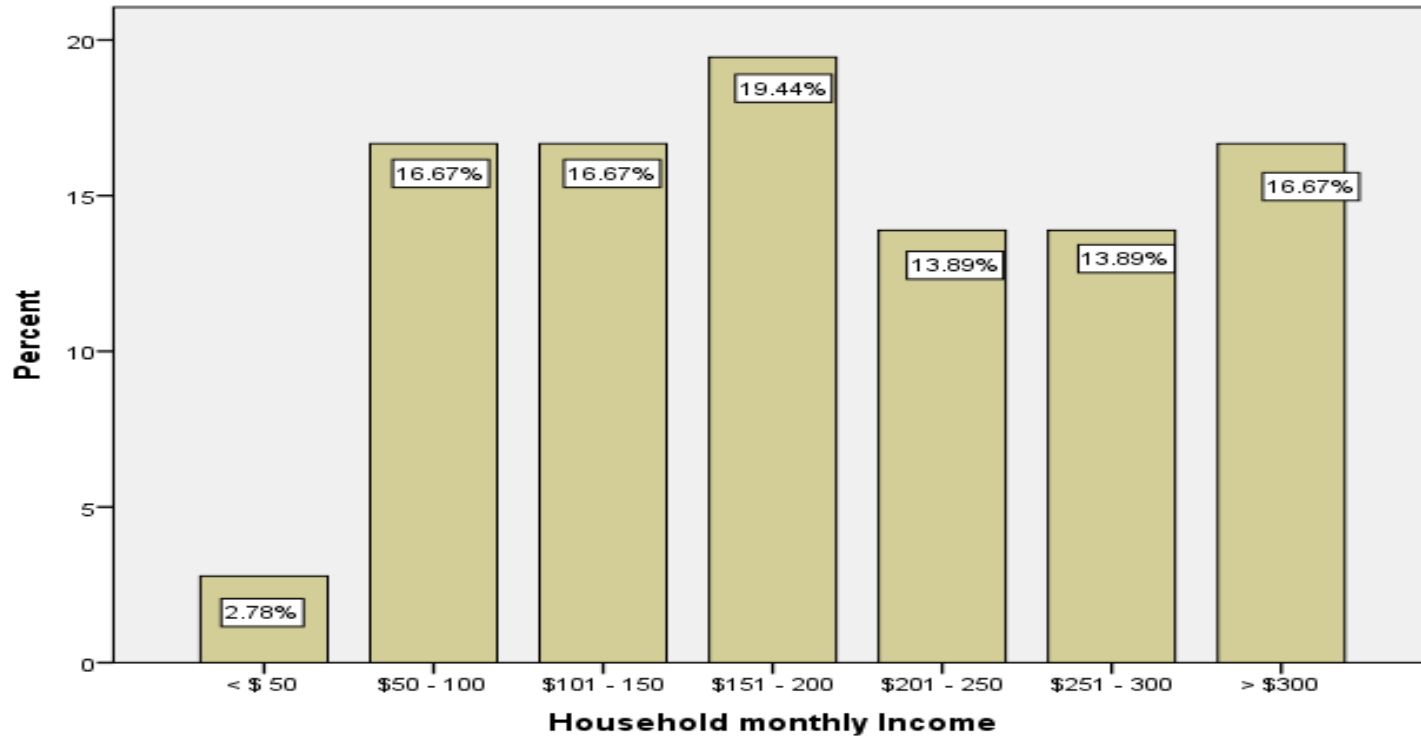
# Occupation of Respondents



- Majority of the interviewee depend on casual work to earn a living.



# Household monthly income



The data shows that less than a half of the respondents (37%) live in a household that earns <\$ 150 a month.

# Nature and Extent of Injecting and Drug Use

- The key informants at the Ministry of Justice said that, between 2010-2012, **23 drug user** cases reported.
- PNTL key informants mentioned that they arrested 13 drug users in 2010, however due to insufficient evidence; they were unable to get a conviction.
- PNTL said that they had arrested eight people connected to drug use and selling in Dili<sup>5</sup> of the suspects arrested were IDUs and they were caught injecting methamphetamine, popularly known as “Sabu Sabu and 3 of whom were drug dealers.

# Nature and extent of drug use

- “All entities should pay attention to the drug smuggled into the country as it is something that is very serious and it could impact people’s lives, especially the young people.” Prosecutor-General, Ana Pessoa Pinto
- President Taur Matan Ruak: Supporting greater community action against the spread of illicit drugs. He called on young people specifically to fight against the increasing use of drugs in Timor-Leste (January 2013).
- April 2013; Ratification of the Draft Resolution to the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

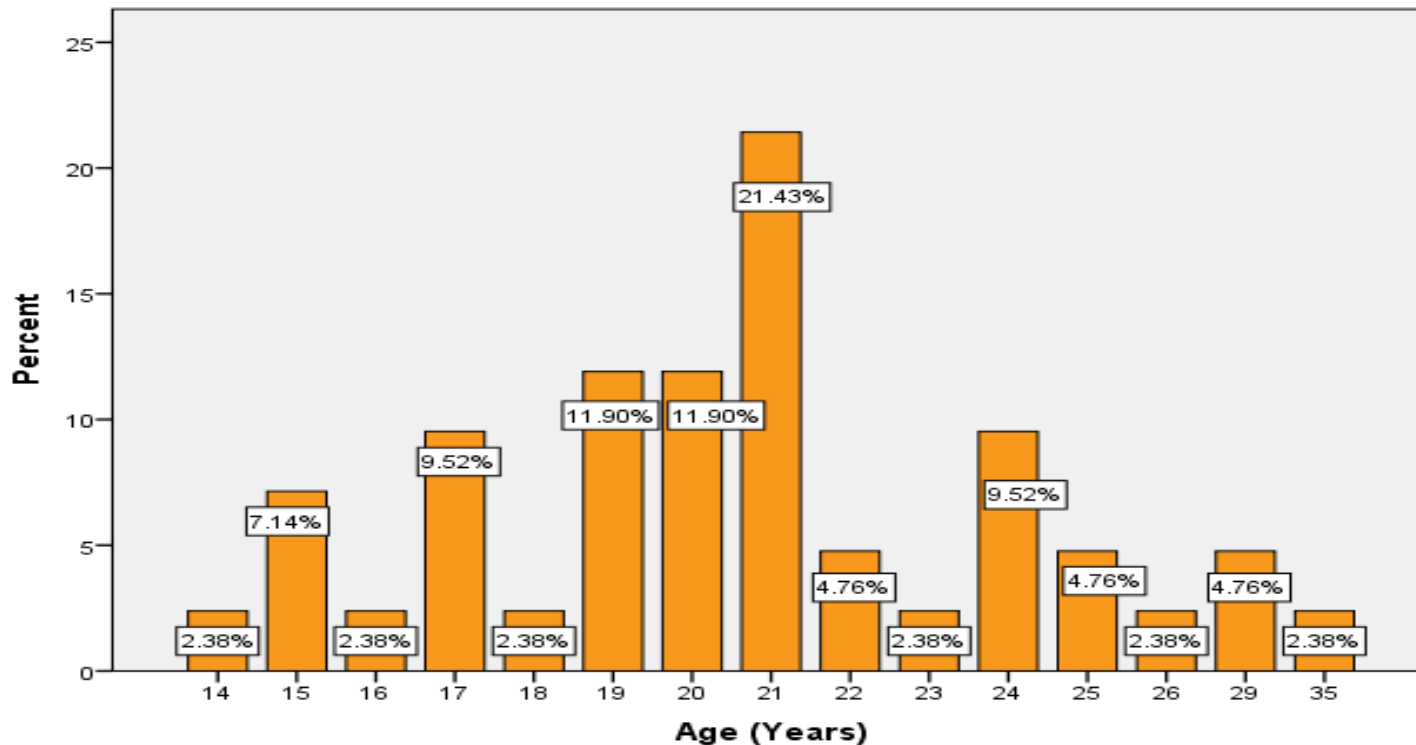
# Types of drugs and nature of drug use.

- Common drugs:
  - Methamphetamine (locally known as Sabu Sabu)
  - heroin
  - cannabis (marijuana)
  - MDMA (ecstasy)
- Most common methods:
  - injection
  - smoking
  - inhaling
  - swallowing
  - drinking

# Drug use sources and locations

- Most common locations:
  - Private homes
  - Bars/night clubs
  - karaoke venues
- Origin of drugs:
  - Singapore,
  - Canada,
  - Nigeria,
  - Mexico

# Age of first drug use



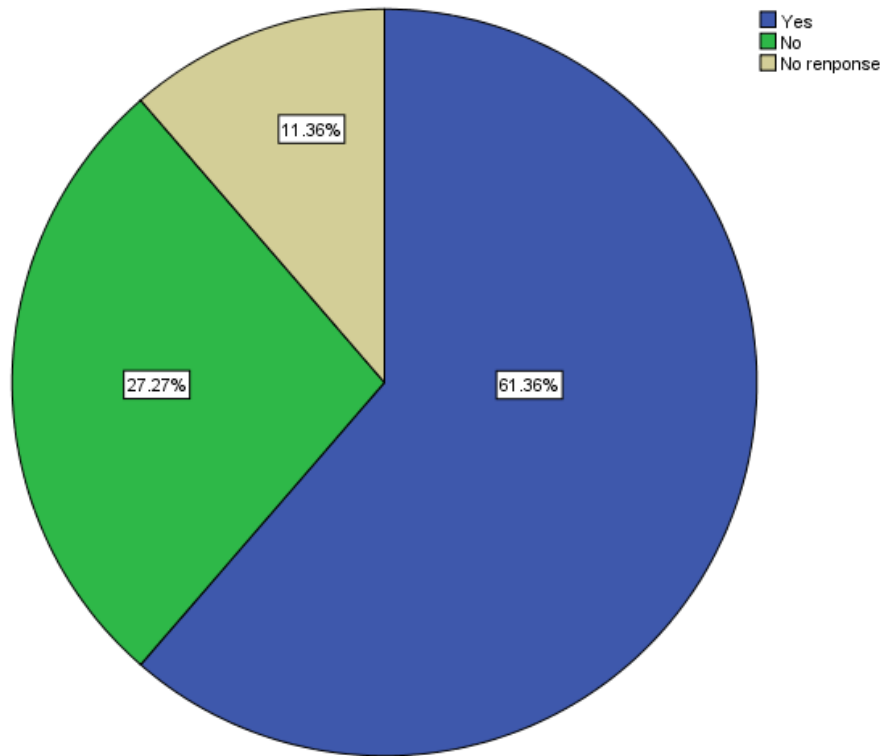
- 86% of respondents commenced using drugs before the age of 24, with 48% beginning before the age of 20.

# Initial method of ingestion

Mode of using the first drugs (Variables)	Number	Percent (%)
Inject intravenously	8	18
Swallow or drink	20	46
Keep under lips/tongue	11	25
Smoke	24	56
Sniff	18	41
Others (didn't specify)	1	2

- Smoking and swallowing or drinking are the most common ways that drug users tried a new substance.

# Most recent drug use



- More than half of drug users (61%) interviewed had used drugs in the last three months.

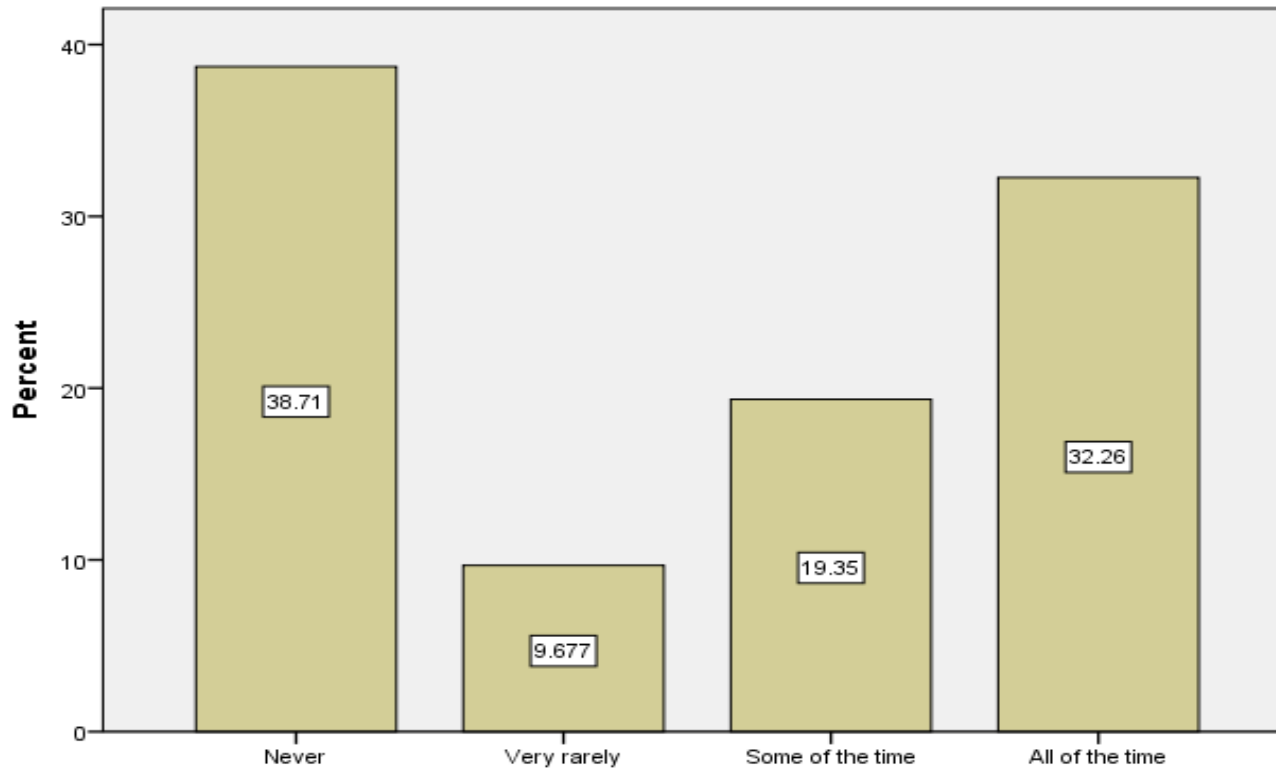


# Most recent method of use

Mode of drug use (Variables)	Number	Percentage
Inject-intra venous	19	43.2
Swallow or drink	27	61.4
Smoke	23	52.3
Keep under lips/tongue	6	13.6
Sniff	13	29.5
Others .	2	4.5

- Smoking and swallowing are still the two most common methods of using drugs

# Safe injecting practices

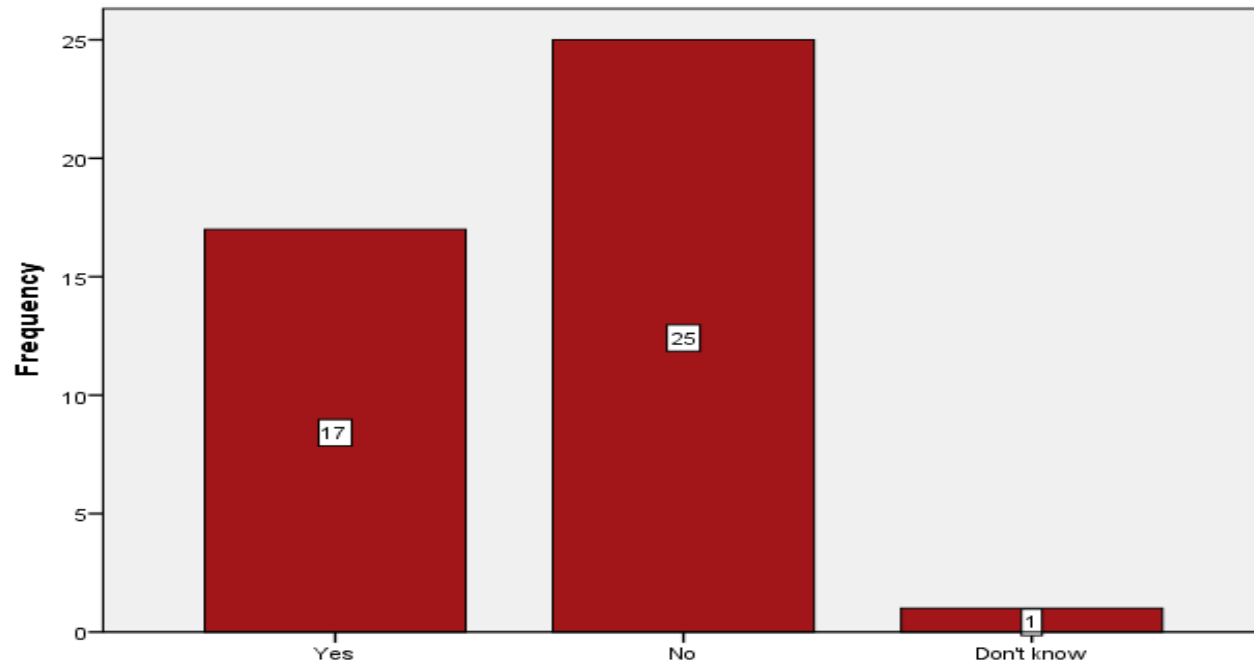


61% of IDUs had shared needles and syringes in the last three months with only 39% never sharing.

# Why people use drugs?

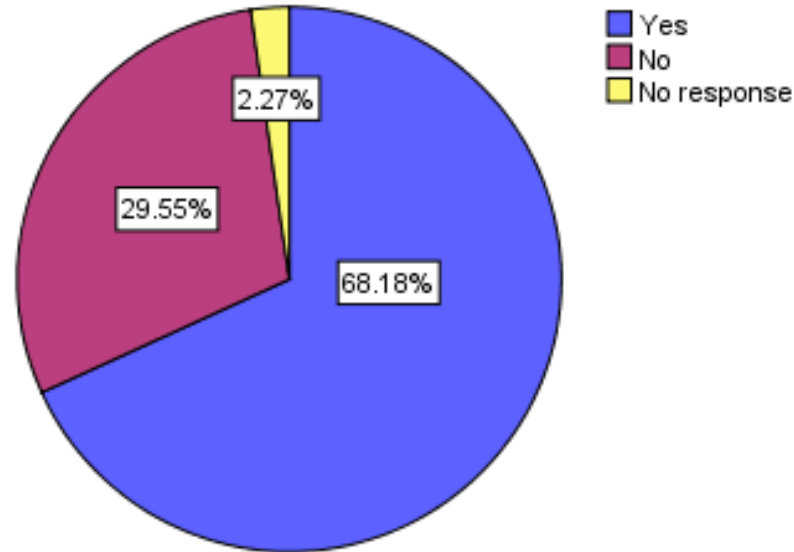
- Frustration and depression
- Unemployment
- Divorce or separation
- Peer influence
- Relationship problems
- Recreation and socialization
- Better enjoyment of sex
- They want to be better musicians and be more confident when performing in concert.

# Sexual Behaviour: Same Sex practices



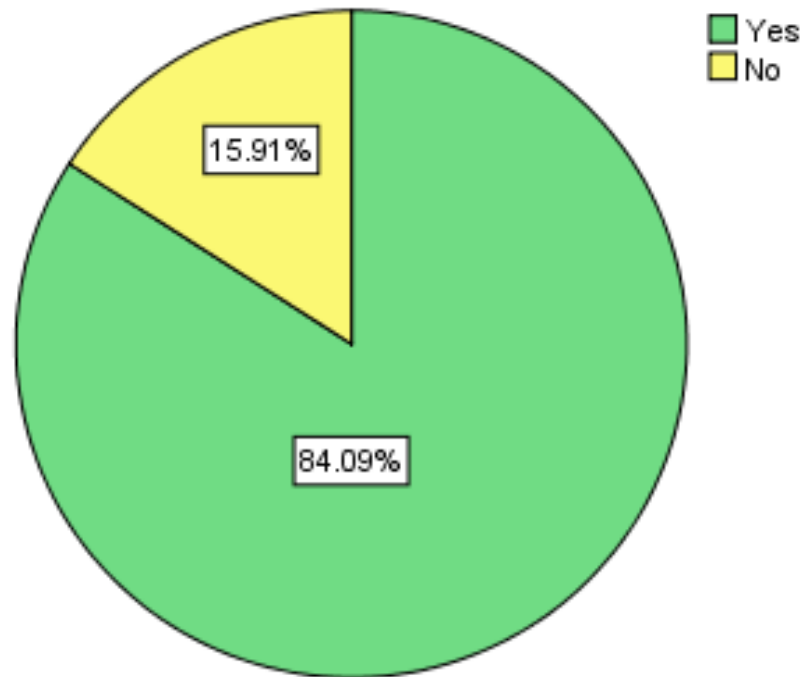
- At least 17 male drug users (40%) said that they have had sex with somebody of the same sex.

# Sexual Behaviour: Sex under the influence of drugs



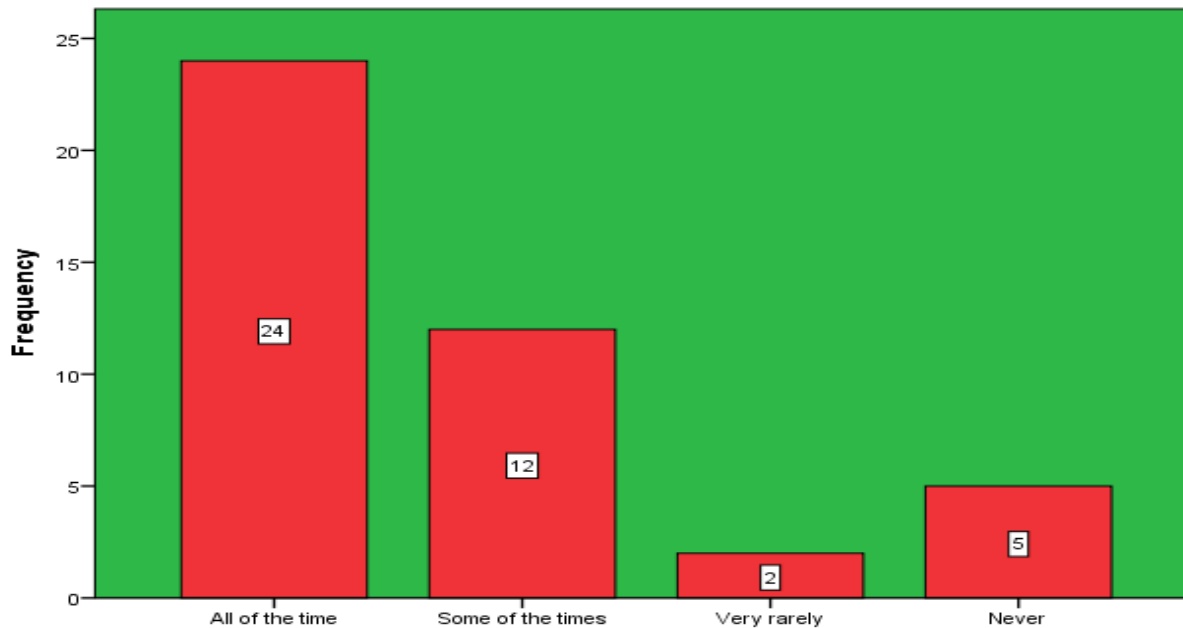
- The majority of the drug users (68%) had had sex with someone other than their regular sexual partners as under the influence of drugs.

# Sexual Behaviour: Sex Workers



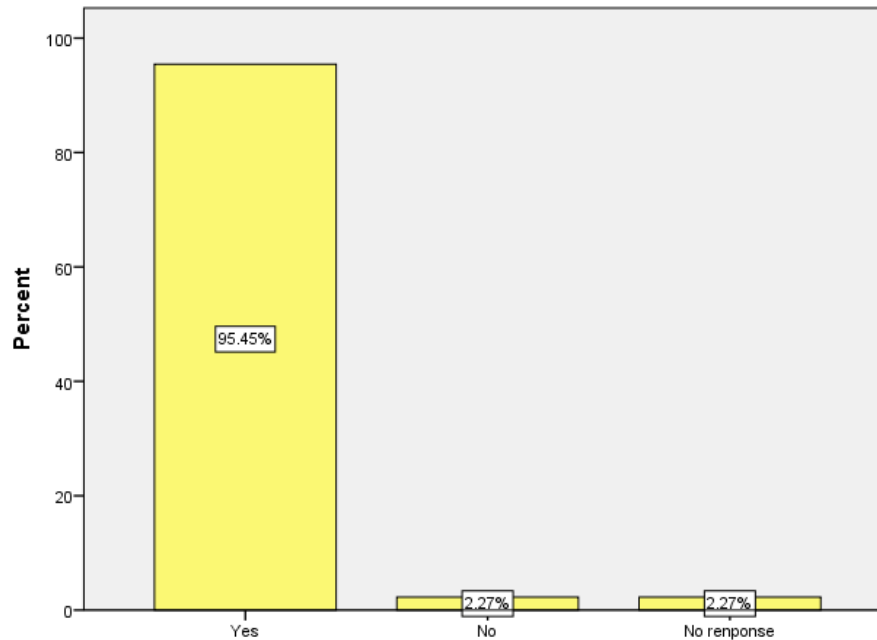
- The majority of the male drug users (84%) had had sex with female/male sex worker.

# Sexual Behaviour: condom use



- 24 (56%) reported to have used condoms all of the time, 12 (28%) used condoms some of the time and 5 (12%) of the drug users had never used condoms.

# Individual motivation to quit



- 42 drug users (95%) interviewed had tried to stop taking drugs. Only one drug user (2%) was unwilling to stop.

*Note: one missing data point.*



# Knowledge on HIV and AIDS: Awareness of the disease

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes	44	100	100
No	0	0	0
Total	44	100	100

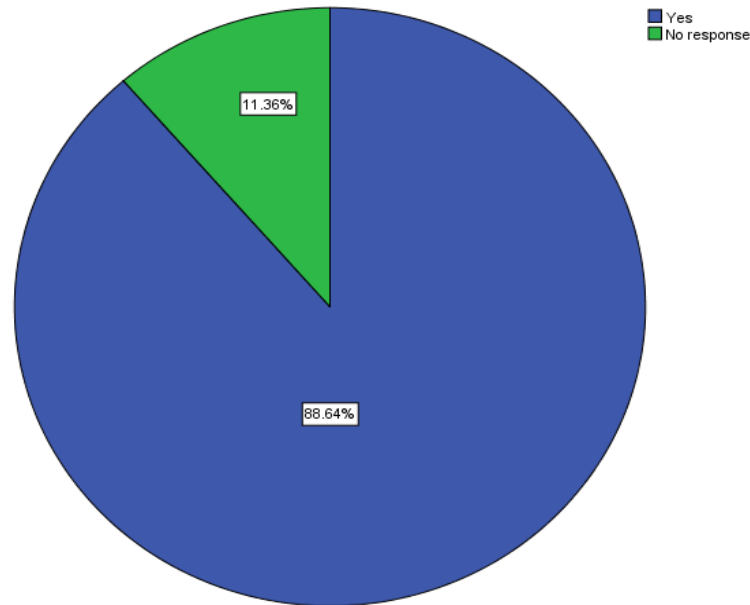
- 100% of the respondents had heard of HIV and AIDS.

# Knowledge about HIV/AIDS: Sources of information

Source of Information	Number	Percentage (%)
School or College	5	11
Health Providers	29	66
Radio	28	64
Women's group	12	27
Family/Friends	23	52
Work place	15	34
Television	30	68
Brochure/leaflet	27	61
NGOs/CBOs	21	48

- Television (68%), Health Providers (66%), radio (64%), brochure/leaflets (61%) and family/friends (52%) were the five leading sources of information.

# Knowledge about HIV/AIDS: Transmission



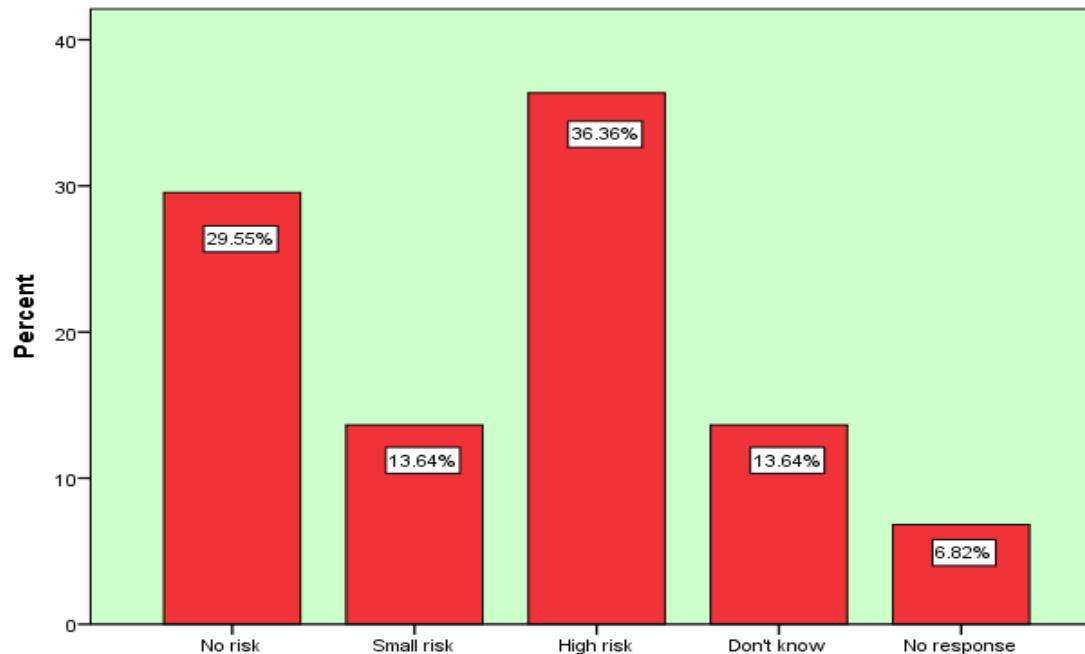
- Majority of the respondents (89%) know how HIV is transmitted and 11% gave no response.

# Knowledge about HIV/AIDS: Transmission routes

Ways of HIV transmission	Number	%
Sharing needles with infected person	32	73
Having sex without condom	39	89
Getting blood transfusion from HIV infected person	26	59
HIV positive pregnant women can give it to their newborns	23	52
Living with a HIV positive relative	1	2

- Sharing needles; 73%, having sex without condom; 88%, getting blood transfusion; 59 % were mentioned by respondents as some of the pathways HIV can be transmitted to individuals.

# Knowledge about HIV/AIDS: Risk perception



- Only 36% said that they were at high risk, 14% had small risk, 30% said that they have no risk of HIV infection.

# Conclusion

- The drug using community in Timor-Leste is still small and very hidden.
- The assessment team concluded that majority of the current drug users are young people.
- The common illicit drugs used are methamphetamine, popularly known as “sabu sabu”, heroin, cannabis (marijuana), and MDMA (ecstasy) sometimes mixed with whisky.
- Most of these drugs are taken through injection, smoking, inhaling; swallowing or drinking.

# Conclusion cont.

- There was inconsistent use of clean needles and syringes among the injecting drug users.
- Despite the high level of knowledge on how HIV is transmitted, there was inconsistent use of condoms among the injecting drug users and non-injecting drug users whenever they had sex in the last 12 months.
- The majority of the respondents (84%) had never been tested for HIV and yet they are practicing risky behaviours.

# Recommendations

1. Policy advocacy – Civil Society Organisations should advocate for government legislation on illicit drug use with a public health approach and harm reduction focus.
2. Provide factual and evidence based education for young people and students about the dangers of drugs use and the related health consequences.
3. Targeted drug education campaigns for IDUs non-injecting drug users, MSM, SWs and CoSWs. The particular needs and risks experienced by these most at risk groups must be addressed in targeted education campaigns.



# Recommendations cont.

4. Establishment of outreach and peer education as key strategies for strengthening community action to reduce the risk of HIV transmission among IDUs and non-injecting drug users and their sexual partners.
5. Facilitate access to Voluntary Confidential Counseling and Testing (VCCT) and, diagnosis and treatment of STIs for IDUs and their sexual partners. FTH should develop referral pathways to access Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) for IDUs diagnosed with HIV.

# Recommendations cont.

6. Create a supportive and enabling environment for injecting and drug users to feel comfortable to access harm reduction and outreach services.
7. The Government should consider providing appropriate drug demand and supply reduction training to PNTL and key immigration and customs officers.
8. The Government should consider equipping all their international borders with modern drug detection capability.

# Recommendation cont.

10. Recommendations for further research: Assess the possibility of establishing a needle and syringe exchange programme and drug treatment and rehabilitation services for IDUs in the future; within the framework of the national policy on illicit drugs once formulated by RDTL

# THANK YOU !

