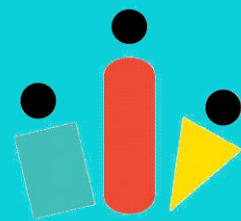


# CAYMAN ISLANDS STUDENT DRUG USE SURVEY Consulting Report National Drug Council Cayman Islands



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**Caribbean Youth Assets HQ. Ltd.**  
Report Completed by Rev. Ambassador Sylvia Wilks



**CARIBBEAN**  
Youth Assets  
**HEADQUARTERS**

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## *Executive Summary*

According to the results of the CISDUS analysis, the National Drug Council has produced significant data about the drug use of students across the islands. It captures data about the demographics of the students, however, although it makes mention of risk and protective factors, its language and questions are deficit thinking. This approach falls short of covering all three approaches to build resilience and ensure positive outcomes for children and youth.

This report highlights some important information about the approach to youth and the importance of youth data. It explores how the National Drug Council can improve the Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey (CISDUS) to include information about positive youth development and developmental assets to better inform prevention programs and youth service providers? In essence, when there is access to relevant socio-emotional, self-report data, youth service providers are more likely to make informed decisions grounded in youth experiences, rather than on perceptions. They are also able to measure growth over time, showing whether their program is making an impact.

After providing the findings of the demographics and topics covered in the survey, a conclusion and recommendations are given to improve it.

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# COLLECTION OF YOUTH DATA

## What is Data?

Data is the facts or information collected to make an analysis. Leaders use analytics to make sound reasoning. It provides information about what happened in the past, giving insight into how and why it happened. It also includes information about what is happening now so one can take the best action and what will happen in the future to predict the best or worst thing that can happen.

## Approach to Youth and the Importance of Youth Data

A significant challenge for working with young people is the predominance of deficit thinking. Deficit thinking is a widely held but inaccurate myth about children and adolescents in the public's mind. Adults expect young people to have problems, so that's what they see. They view young people as problems to be fixed. The perceptions are reinforced by media coverage, policies, and programs that focus almost exclusively on the deficits and dangers in young people's lives. However, a consistent and growing body of evidence-based correlation and statistical regression analysis points to the cumulative influence, importance, and power of developmental assets in relation to significant dimensions of young people's lives. Importantly, research suggests combining three approaches to build resilience and ensure positive outcomes for children and youth: positive youth development, risk reduction through universal and early interventions, and effective treatment and support for children at greater levels of need. For these approaches to work, they must be child and family-driven, strength-based, empowering, culturally and linguistically competent, ecological, and able to address a variety of individual and geographic needs. Also, the accumulation of practice knowledge demonstrates that the effectiveness of these approaches requires strategic, coordinated, collaborative, data-driven, results-oriented, accountable, and capacity building.

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# **ANALYSIS OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS STUDENT DRUG USE SURVEY**

The aim of the survey is to gain an understanding of the magnitude and characteristics that surround youth substance use among all students between the ages of 11 and 18 years old in the Cayman Islands. Additionally, the objectives of the survey are as follows:

1. To describe the trends and patterns of substance use among middle and high school students in the Cayman Islands
2. Identify changes in the prevalence and frequency of substance use among students
3. To explore the protective and risk factors underlying youth substance use among students in the Cayman Islands
4. Provide guidance on areas of focus for prevention programming, policy, and other anti-drug strategies

## **Research Statement**

How can the National Drug Council improve the Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey to include information about positive youth development and developmental assets?

How can the National Drug Council use the Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey to inform prevention programs and youth service providers?

## **Data Elements**

The Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey (CISDUS) reports are comprehensively put together and analyzed. The primary demographic information on the survey and in the report are gender, year group, and the young person's district. Figure 1 highlights the gender demographics from

2012 to 2020. It shows a drop from 2012 to 2014 but then a gradual increase from thereon, for both males and females.

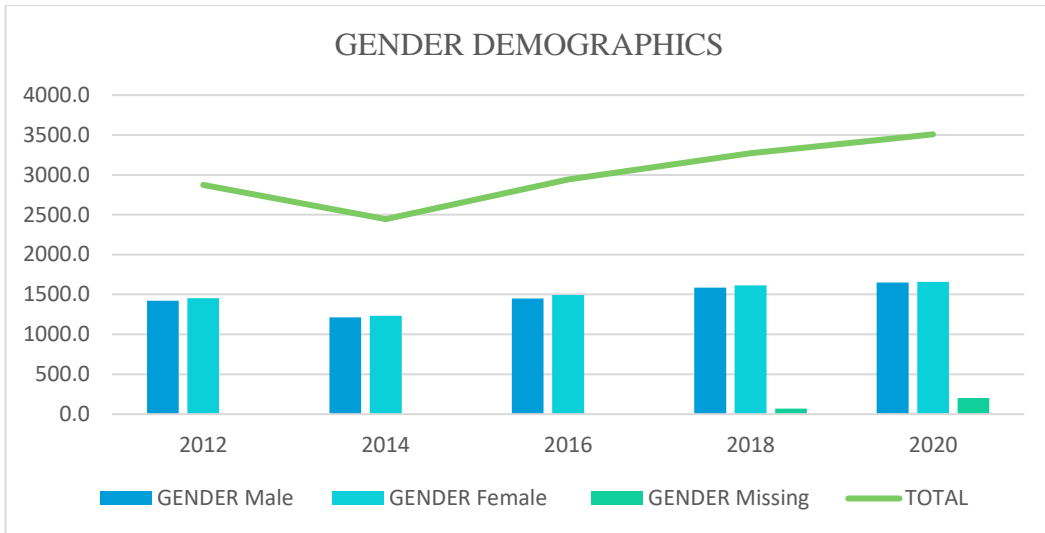


Figure 1. NDC Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey Gender Demographics

Figure 2 highlights the year group demographics of the students from 2012 to 2020.

It also shows a drop from 2012 to 2014 but then a gradual increase from thereon.

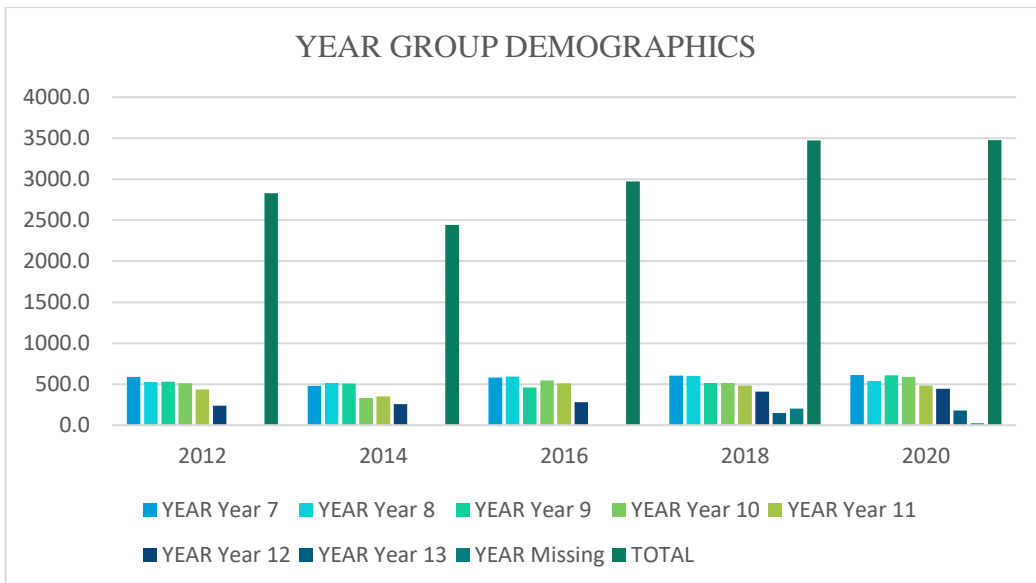


Figure 2. NDC Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey Year Group Demographics

Figure 3 highlights the district/ location demographics of the students from 2012 to 2020.

It also shows a drop from 2012 to 2014 but then a gradual increase from thereon.

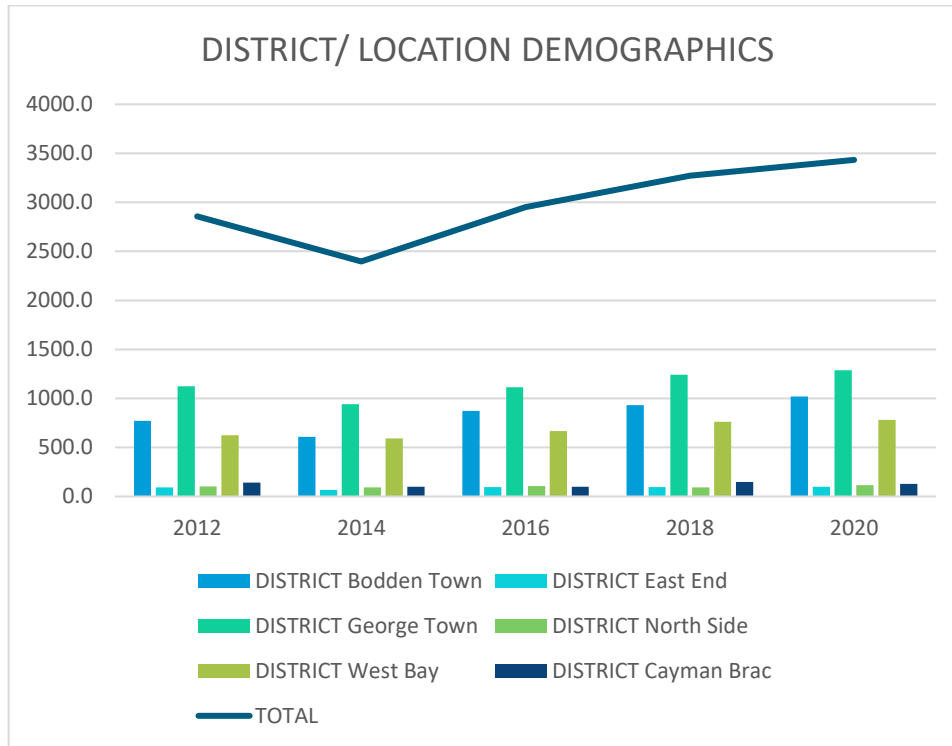


Figure 3. NDC Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey District/ Location Demographics

The Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey does what it intends. It sets out to describe the trends and patterns of substance use and it shows changes in the frequency and prevalence of substance use. As seen in table 1, the survey cover topics about the various drugs, multiple substances, illegal drugs, and issues tied to the use of drugs e.g., mental health. There is also mention of risk and protective factors and family upbringing.

Table 1: NDC Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey and Report Topics Covered

2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
Alcohol, Cocaine, Ganja, Tobacco, Multiple Substances	Alcohol, Cocaine, Ganja, Tobacco, Multiple Substances	Alcohol, Tobacco, Marijuana	Alcohol, Cigarettes, E-Cigarettes, Marijuana	Alcohol, Cigarettes, E-Cigarettes, Marijuana
Other illegal drugs	Other illegal drugs	Other illegal drugs	Other illegal drugs	Other illegal drugs
	Energy Drinks	Energy Drinks	Energy Drinks	
			Vapes	
			Mental Health	Mental Health
		Risk and Protective Factors	Family Upbringing	

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## Findings

In figure 1., although the differentiation between males and females was small, the number of females interviewed was consistently more than the males. As seen in figure 2, most students surveyed were in the younger year, groups 7 to 9. Figure 3 shows that most students were from the George Town and Bodden Town districts.

As seen in table 1., from 2012 to 2022, the survey asked questions about alcohol, however cocaine was mentioned only in the 2012 and 2014 survey, tobacco from 2012 to 2016, and the wording changed to cigarettes in 2018 and 2020. E-cigarettes were mentioned in 2018 and 2020, and wherein ganja was worded in 2012 and 2014 it was changed to marijuana in 2016, 2018, and 2020. Other illegal drugs appear every year, and whereas energy drinks appeared in 2014, 2016, and 2018, vapes were only mentioned in 2018. In 2018 family upbringing was included, and mental health was addressed both 2018 and 2020. In 2016 there was mention of risk, and protective factors, and the benefits of substance abuse prevention programs are pointed in the 2018 report.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objectives and findings of the Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey present the deficit language and approach. What if the focus was not only on student drug use but instead on how well they are functioning in all critical domains? An analysis of various data collected by the Search Institute along with the evaluation of various initiatives conducted by third party evaluators make the case that assessing cumulative benefits of developmental assets for individual youth can help to increase understanding of what constitutes risk, explain the prevention of high risk behaviors, explain protection from high risk behaviors, explain the expression of thriving behaviors, better understand relationships between asset categories, and risk and thriving developmental outcomes and explain academic achievement and commitment to learning <sup>i</sup>. It also makes a case for the cumulative benefits of programs applying the asset model.

It is thus recommended that:-

1. The NDC integrates developmental assets into its current survey OR,
2. Fund and provide the Search Institute's developmental assets survey

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