



# WORLD DRUG REPORT 2025: KEY TRENDS AND POLICY CHALLENGES FOR AFRICA

**Dr. Olubusayo Akinola**  
Head, Social Welfare, Drug Control & Crime  
Prevention Division



An Integrated, Prosperous  
and Peaceful Africa



# Presentation Overview

---

- ❑ The Continent of Africa and its Union
- ❑ Statistics and Trends – 2025 WDR
- ❑ Current Situation in Member States
- ❑ African Union Responses : AU Plan of Action
- ❑ Policy Implication





# AFRICAN UNION

---

Inter-governmental organization, comprises 55 countries.

Launched in 2002 as a successor to the OAU formed in 1963.

Goal: Achieve Integration & Increase Cooperation.

# Context: Population Pyramid

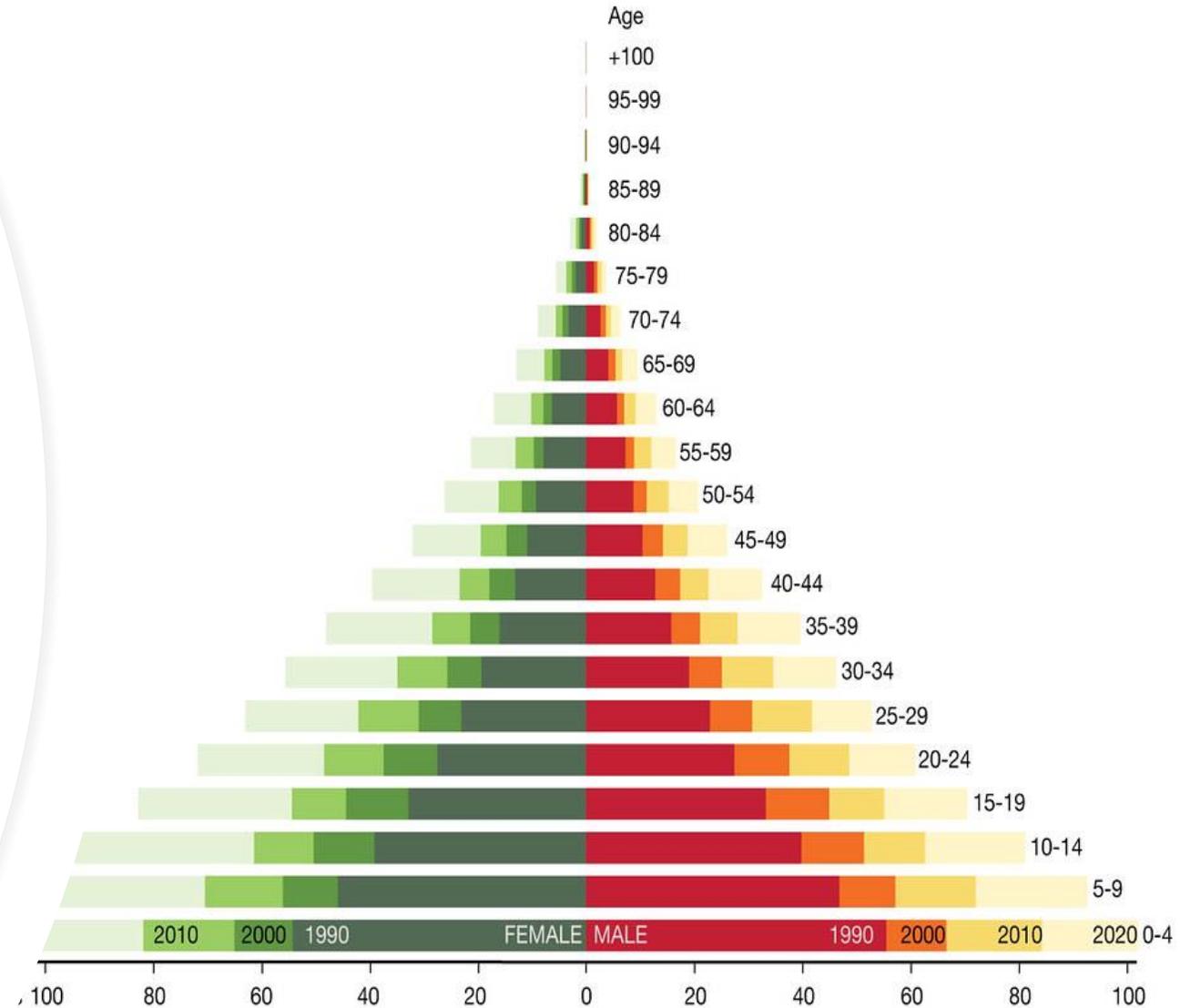
## High Youth population

- Africa is home to 1.3 billion people
- 475 million are aged 15 to 35 years old
- Almost 60% of Africa's population is below 25 years of age, making Africa the world's youngest continent.

## Exponential Increase in drug use

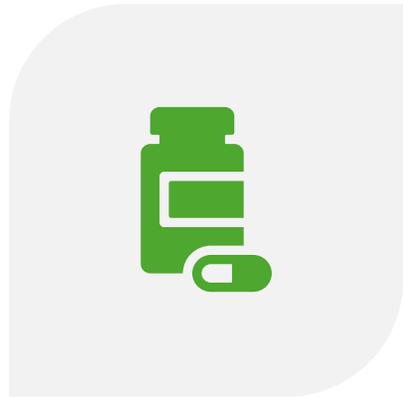
- 40% increase in drug consumption expected in Africa by 2030.

Age and gender structure of African population





# STATISTICS & TRENDS – 2025 WDR



The WDR, Issued Annually, Provides a Rigorous, Evidence-based, and Impartial Assessment of Global Drug Trends and Emerging Patterns.



The 2025 Edition Underscores a Steadily Expanding and Rapidly Transforming Drug Market, Carrying Profound Implications for Public Health, Social Stability, and Governance across all Regions.

## KEY FINDINGS



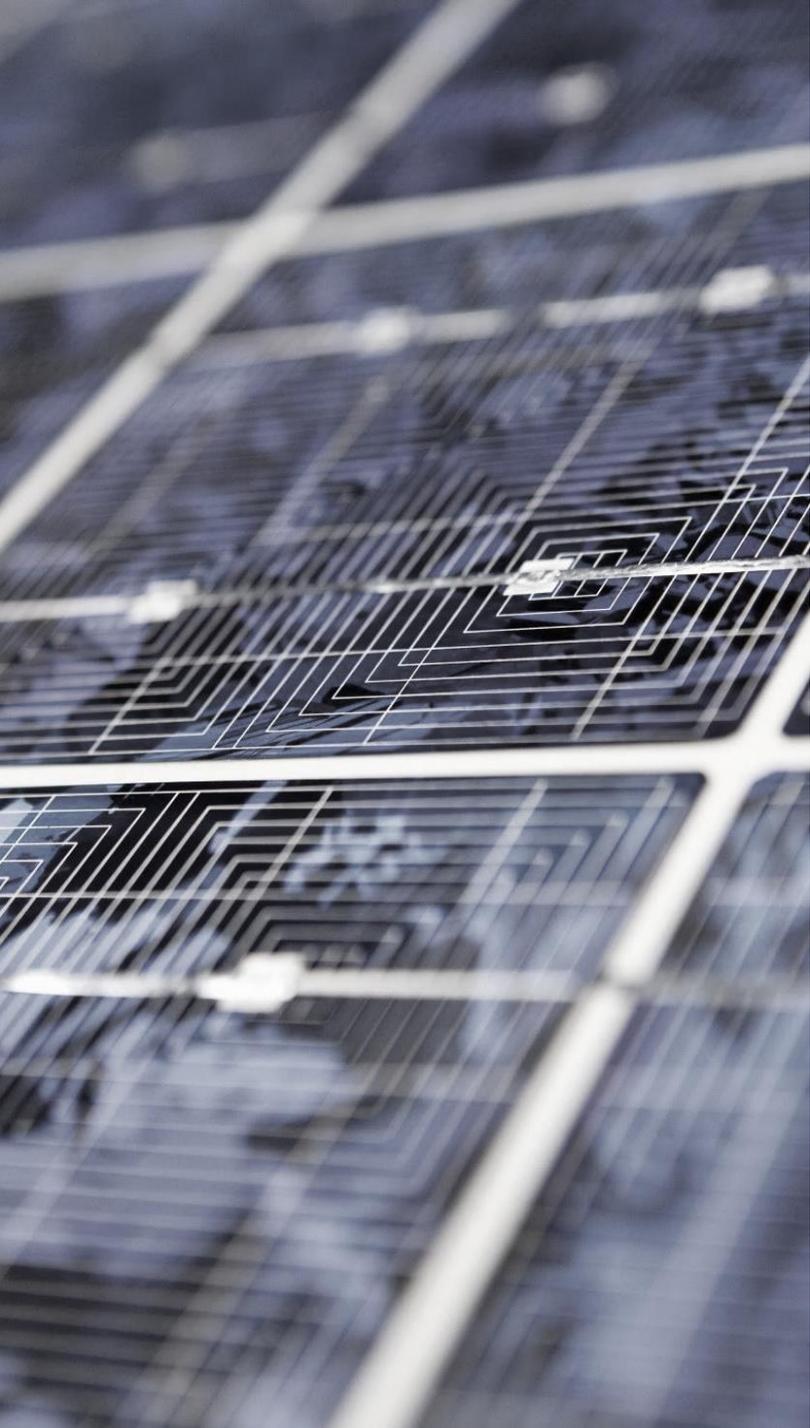
Proportion of Persons Treated with Tramadol as their Primary Drug of Concern among all treated in Drug-related Treatment in Africa, 2023 or the year with Latest Available Data



Source: UNODC 2025 WDR

The non-medical use of synthetic pharmaceuticals is of primary concern

Increased use of tramadol in West and Central Africa.



## STATISTICS & TRENDS – 2025 WDR

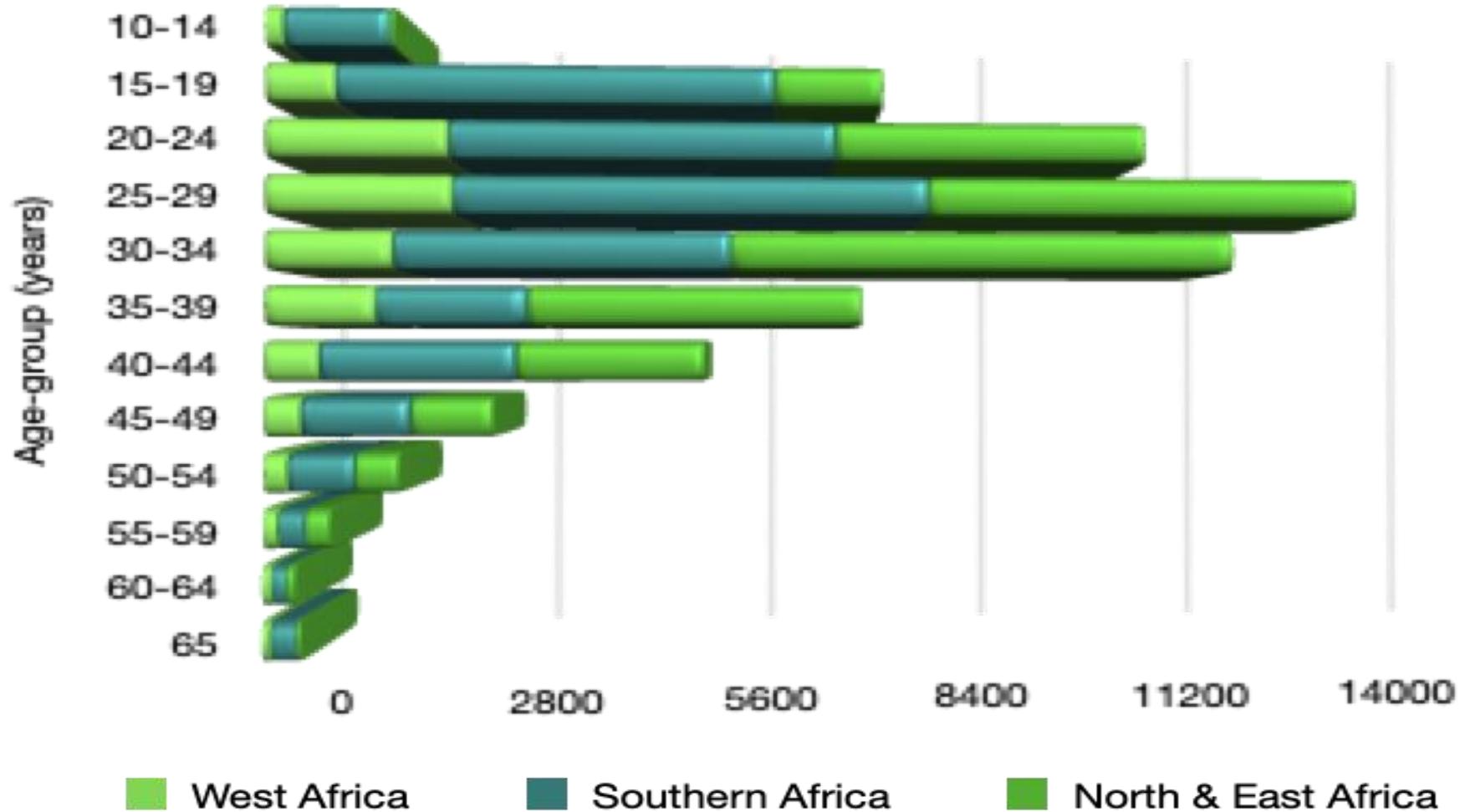
---

**Nitazenes (Non-Medical Use):** Increasingly detected in Africa (Mauritius, West Africa), often mixed with cocaine, cannabis, benzodiazepines, ecstasy, and herbal products.

**“Kush” (Nitazenes-based):** Emerged in Sierra Leone (2022), spreading rapidly across West/Central Africa (Liberia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal), causing severe harm.

**Pregabalin (Non-Medical Use):** Reported across North, West, Central, and East Africa, though prevalence remains poorly documented.

# Age Disaggregated Data



## Age-disaggregated data (contd.)

---

- ❖ The age-disaggregated data for all treatment entrants from the PAENDU report revealed SUDs in both the young and older population ranging from 10 to 65 years.
- ❖ However, SUDs were more prevalent among people aged 15 to 44 years and this accounts for about 80% of all treatment entrants.
- ❖ Seven in 10 persons who accessed treatment were aged 15 to 34 years.
- ❖ 4.21% of individuals treated for SUDs were aged 10 to 14 years (classified as children and young teens) implying that early initiation of substance use often occur in some settings.

# Gender and substance use



1 of 8 persons that accessed Treatment for Cannabis UD is a woman



1 of 8 persons that accessed Treatment for Heroin UD is a woman



1 of 9 persons that accessed Treatment for cocaine UD is a woman



1 of 3 persons that accessed Treatment for disorders related to the use of pharmaceuticals is a woman

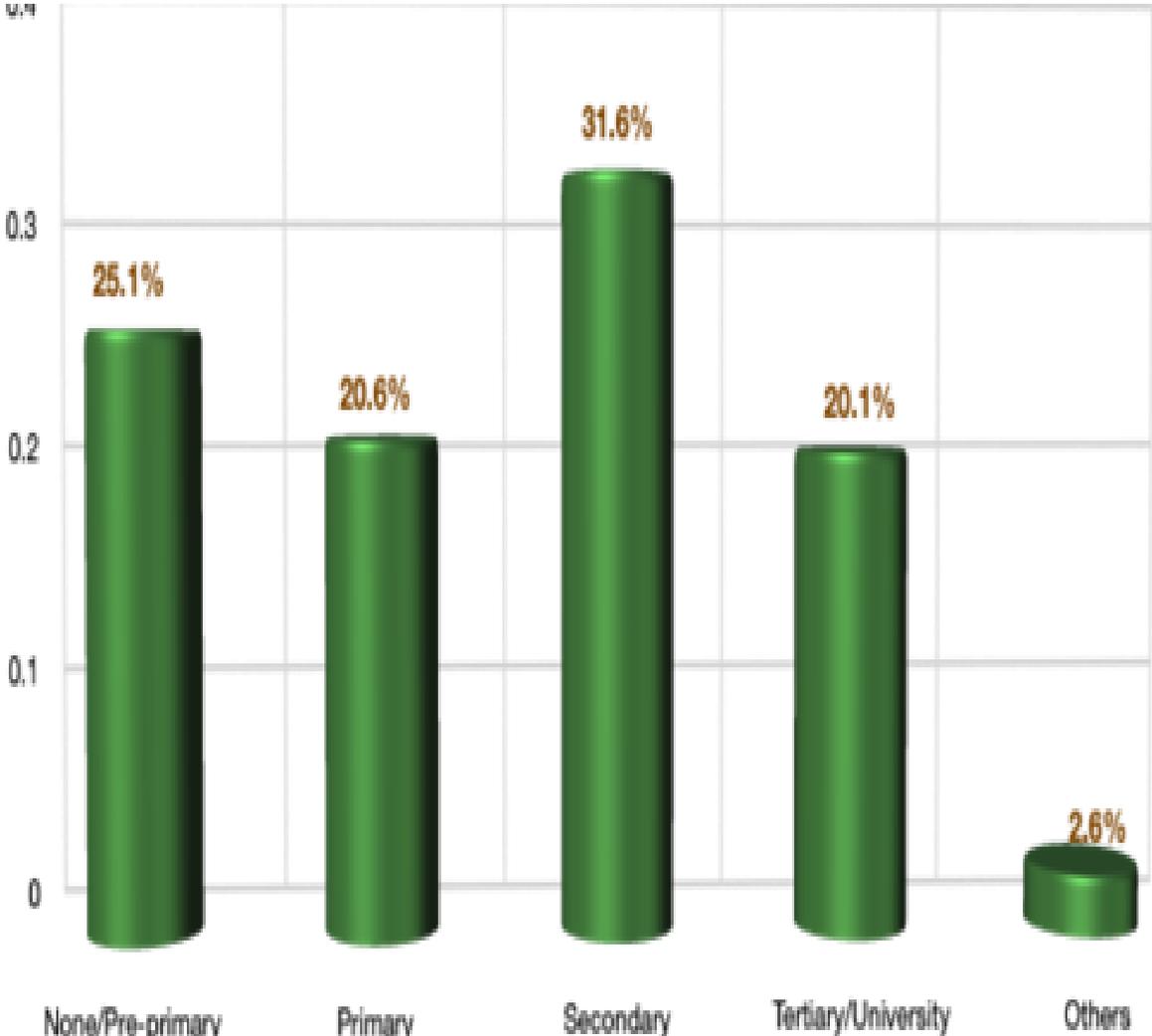


1 of 4 persons that accessed Treatment for alcohol UD is a woman

The data reflected gender differential in substance use disorders amongst treatment entrants

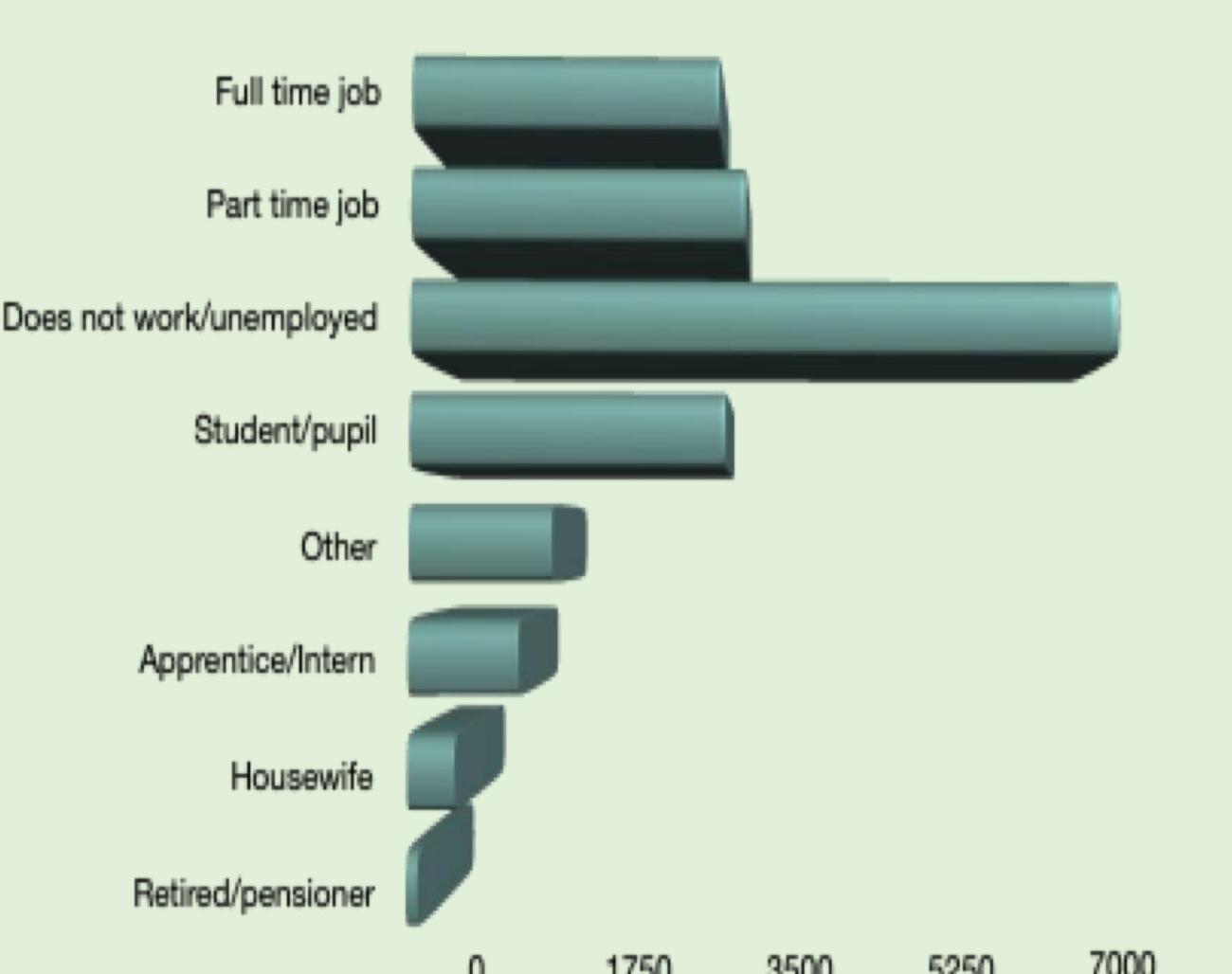
# Educational status of treatment entrants

1 of 2 persons who accessed treatment for SUDs had either only completed primary or secondary school education.



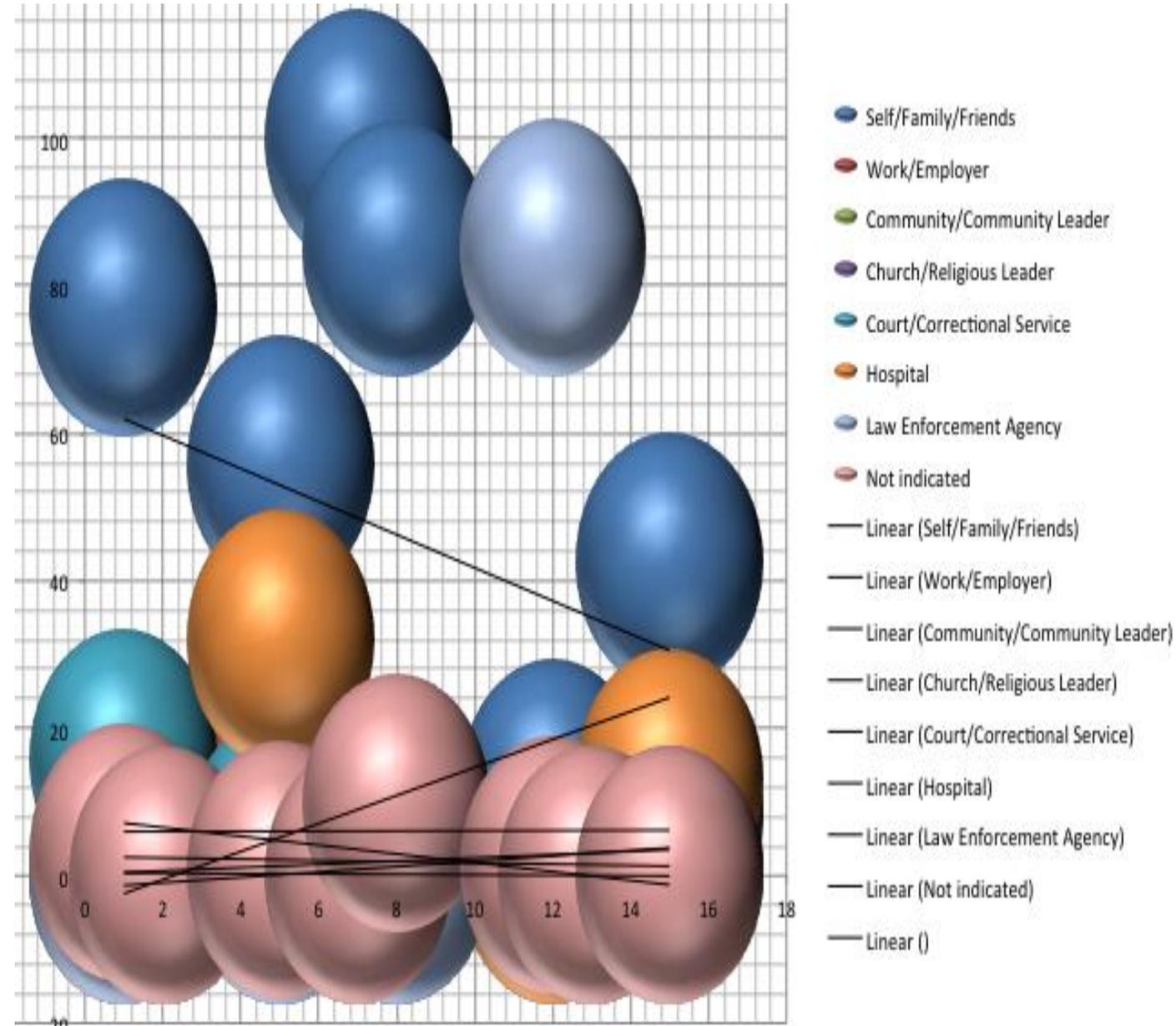
# Occupation of treatment entrants

Majority were unemployed and a sizeable proportion of students were two times more likely to use drugs than those PT or FT jobs



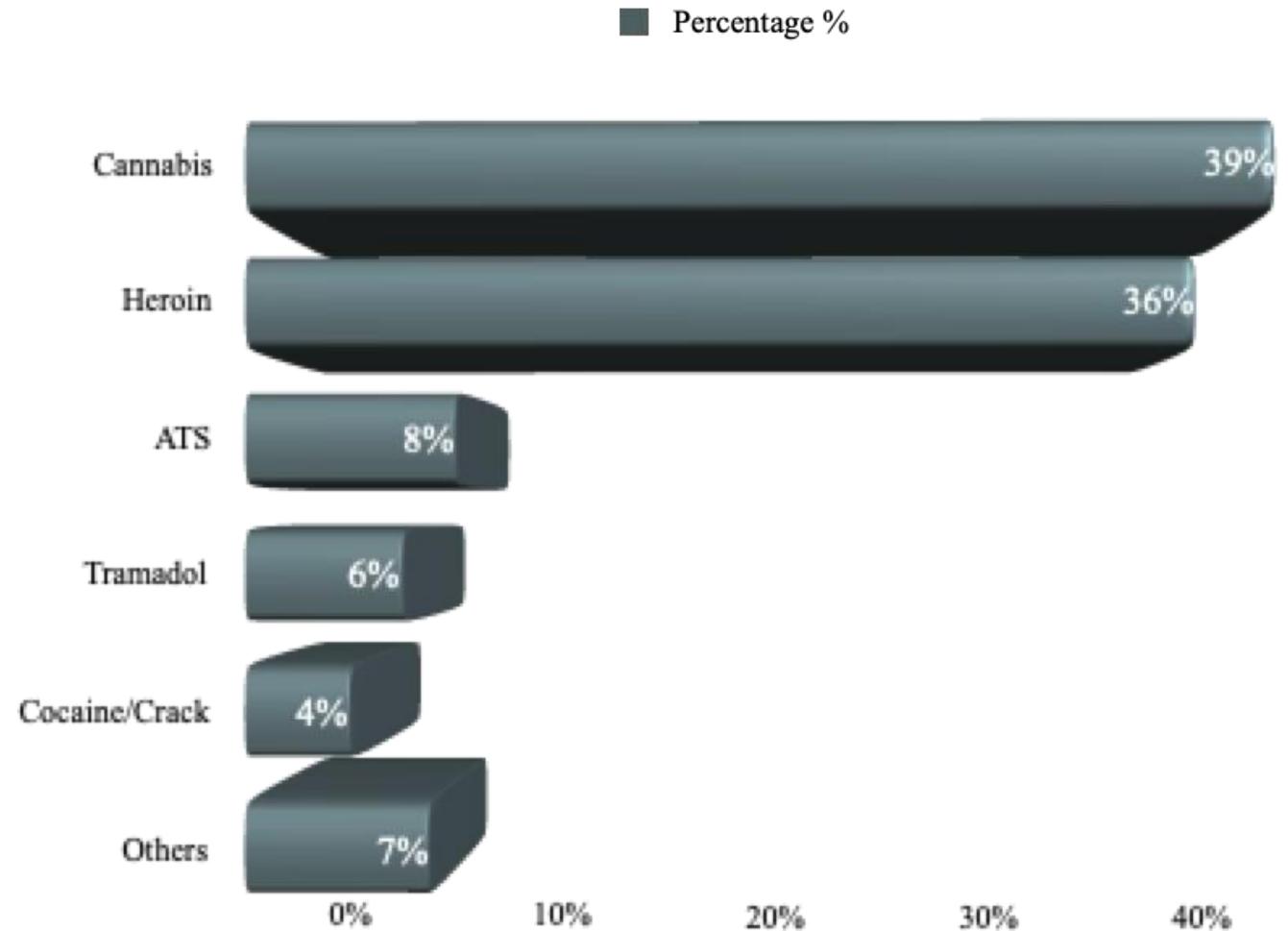
# Sources of referral to SUD treatment services

- People in treatment were most often referred by friends and families.
- The number of countries that referred people into treatment from the judiciary increased significantly.
- The report suggests that countries provide option for referral into treatment and diversion away from criminal sanctions in minor cases involving the possession of drugs within the permissible threshold of quantities of controlled substances for personal use in each country



# Primary Substance of Treatment Demand

Cannabis is the leading substance for which individuals seek treatment in Africa, accounting for over 39% of all SUD treatment cases followed by Heroin (36%)



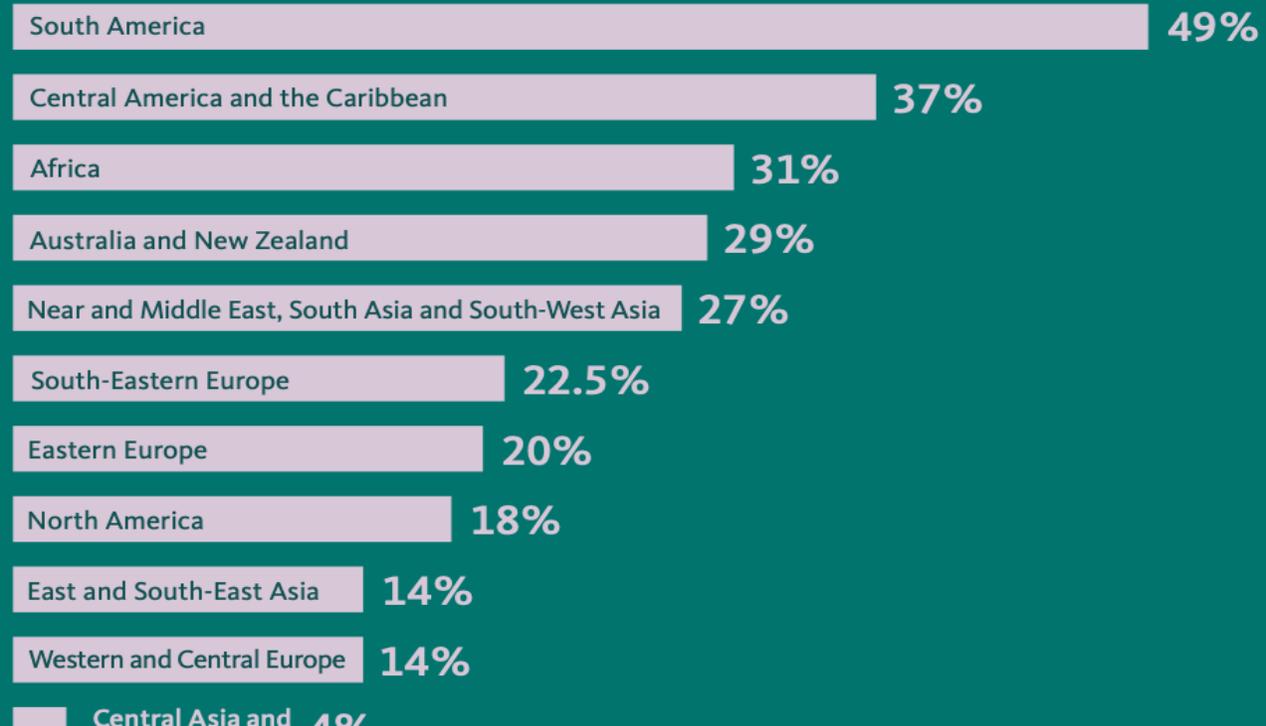
Primary Drugs Used by Persons in Treatment

# Innovative Strategies of Youths involved in Substance Abuse on the Continent

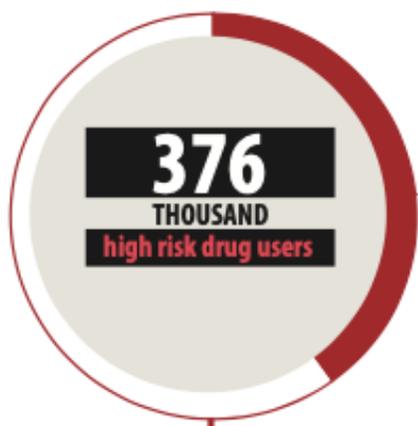
- Science Students
- Kush, speedballs, bars, tornado, monkey tail, Joint, Weed, Cat, Pot etc.
- Algae, Dung of wall gecko, Urine, Exhume bones, Diapers



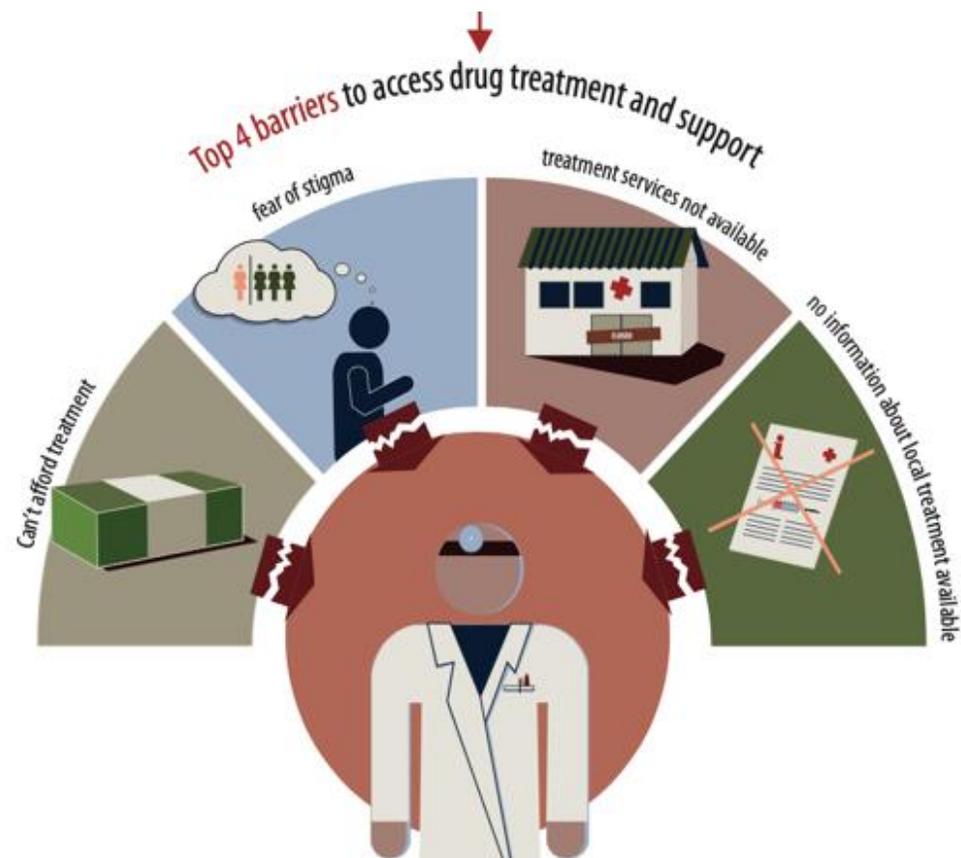
## People under 25 years old in treatment, 2022



# Barriers to treatment and support



40% of high risk drug users wanted treatment, but were unable to get it

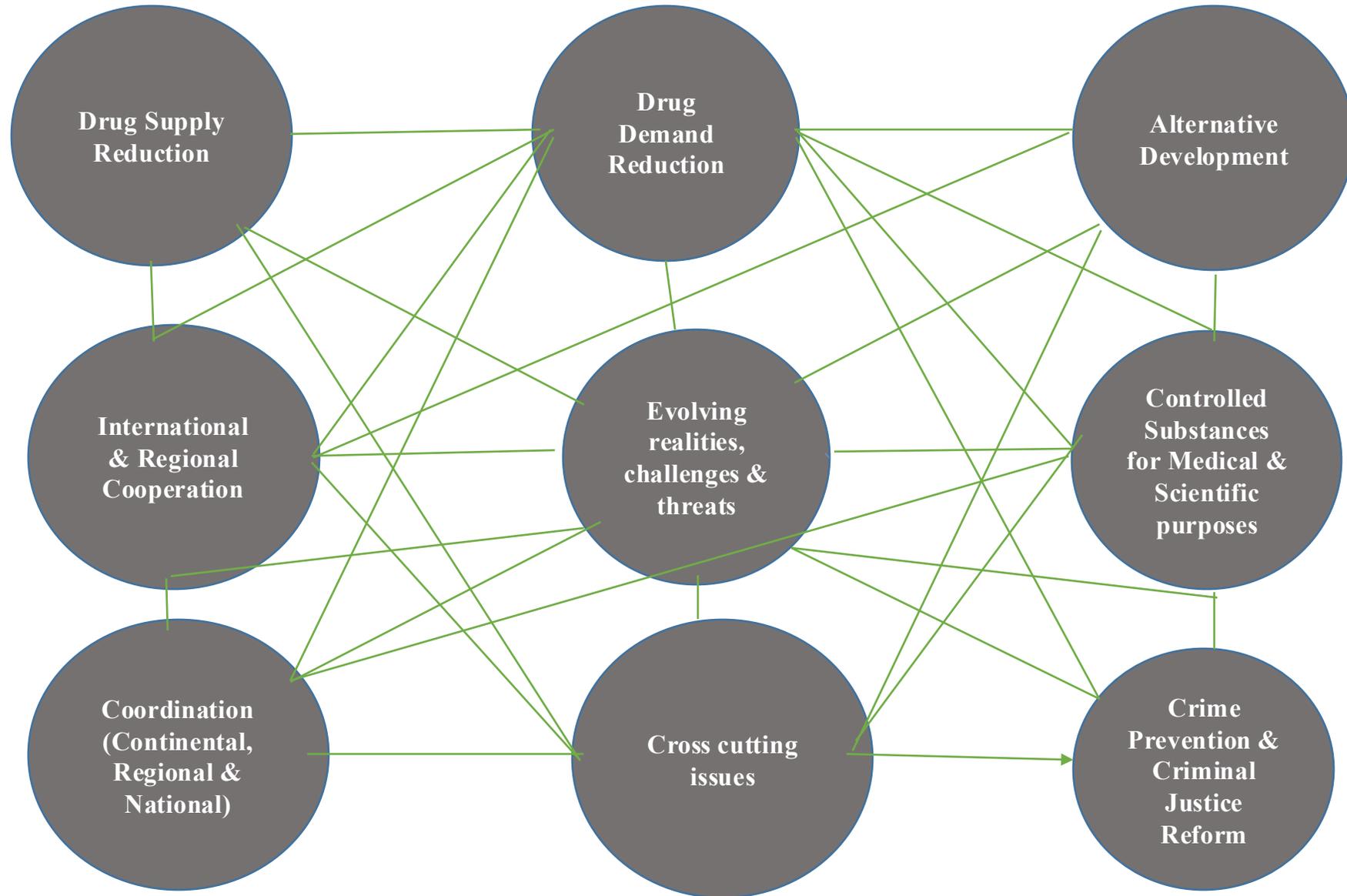


Source: UNODC drug use survey in Nigeria, <https://www.unodc.org>

## **African Union Response : The AUPA DC & CP**

- The overall objective of the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention is to improve the health, security and socio-economic well-being of the people of Africa by addressing drug trafficking and problematic drug use in all its forms and manifestations and to prevent the onset of drug use.
- The Plan of Action is anchored on nine (9) policy pillars
- It follows a balanced and integrated approach to drug control, providing a solid framework to address both supply and demand reduction in corresponding measures, as well as ensuring availability of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.

# The Nine Priority Areas of the Drug Action Plan



## African Union Response

- Prevention, ATI
- Treatment, rehabilitation, recovery & Care
- Evidence-based Harm Reduction





## Key Achievements

- Establishment of drug use epidemiology sentinel surveillance systems in 35 African Union Member States.
- Enhanced technical capacities for the implementation of drug demand reduction and epidemiology programs through leveraging strategic partnerships for training (UNODC, Colombo Plan, INCB etc)
  - 6,215 professionals have been trained in Universal Prevention (UPC), Treatment (UTC) and Recovery (URC) in 26 African Countries.
- Training of competent authorities to ensure accessibility and availability of controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes while preventing diversion.
- Youth engagement in drug prevention program
  - Formation of National Youth Corps for Drug Prevention linked to national drug control authorities
  - First African Union Youth Forum held in Zambia in 2019

## Key Achievements

- Incorporation of Traditional and religious leaders in drug use prevention, treatment, and care
  - Southern Africa Network of Traditional Leaders in DDR launched in April 2024
  - National networks of traditional leaders in DDR established in Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries
- Integration of gender-sensitive and age-appropriate perspectives in continental and national strategies,
  - Cairo Declaration on addressing drug use and SUD among youth, women and children
  - Lusaka High-level Session Declaration on addressing substance use and related health disorders among youth, women and children
- Annual continental Consultations for DDR and epidemiology since 2015
- In-country public-private sector partnerships to address drug prevention

# Policy Leadership and Global Engagement

The AU has consistently represented the continent's priorities in global drug policy fora, including active participation in high-level dialogues at the UNODC Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and the United Nations General Assembly. These engagements have amplified African perspectives in shaping international drug control policies.





Gracias

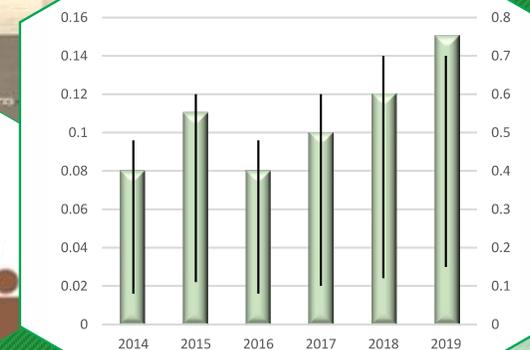
Merci

Thank you

Obrigada

شكراً لك

African Union 



African Union 

Agenda  
**2063**  
The Africa we Want  
