

**Narcotics Division, Security Bureau *commissioned*
Public Opinion Programme, HKU *to conduct***

**Public Opinion Survey on RESCUE Drug Testing Scheme
Summary of Findings**

1. In January 2014, the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau commissioned POP to conduct this “Public Opinion Survey on RESCUE Drug Testing Scheme”. The primary objective of the survey was to gauge public opinion on the condition of drug abuse in Hong Kong as well as their views on “RESCUE Drug Testing Scheme”.
2. The target population of this survey was Cantonese- or Putonghua-speaking Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above, with domestic helpers excluded. Telephone interviews were conducted between **17 February and 14 March, 2014**. A total of **1,004** target respondents were successfully interviewed. The overall response rate of this survey was **47.0%** (based on the AAPOR definition), and the standard sampling error for percentages based on this sample was less than 1.6 percentage points. In other words, the sampling error for all percentages using the total sample was less than plus/minus 3.2 percentage points at 95% confidence level.
3. The survey results show that 43% of the respondents thought the drug abuse problem is serious in Hong Kong, 11% among them considered the problem very serious and 32% thought quite serious. Also, under the Laws of Hong Kong (i.e. The Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Cap. 134)), dangerous drug possession or consumption is subject to a maximum penalty of 7 years’ imprisonment and a fine of HK\$1 million. Nearly half of the respondents (47%) believed such penalty is adequate, 28% considered it heavy and 20% said it is light. With regards to the saying that in light of the current situation, drug abusers should be early identified through drug test in order to refer them to counselling and treatment programmes, 86% of the respondents agreed to this, with 59% among them supported it very much while over one quarter (27%) somewhat supported. Less than one tenth (9%) objected to the idea and only less than 5% (4%) opted for the neutral stance.

4. The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) launched a 4-month public consultation exercise on “RESCUE Drug Testing Scheme (RDT)” from September 2013 to January 2014. The number of respondents who have and have not heard of this RDT scheme prior to the survey was pretty close, at 48% and 52% respectively. After listening to a brief introduction by our interviewers, 88% of the respondents showed supported the Scheme initially, of which 57% said “very much support” and 31% “somewhat support”. Only 6% held the opposite view while 4% were half-half.
5. Regarding some specific proposals of the Scheme, as high as 90% respondents supported “the drug testing procedures to be conducted in two stages. The person is required to undergo screening test first, only when one fails the one or more than one screening test would one’s bodily samples be collected for conducting a laboratory test.” Next, 87% supported the proposal that “those proven to be drug abusers can be eligible for a chance to receive counselling and treatment programmes in place of prosecution”. Meanwhile, 82% supported that “law enforcement officers can require that person to undergo a drug test only when the person’s physical state shows that he/she may have just taken drugs”, while 78% supported that “law enforcement officers can require that person to undergo a drug test only when there are substances suspected of being drugs present in the near vicinity of the person concerned.”
6. Survey results also show three quarters of the respondents (75%) believed that “RESCUE Drug Testing Scheme” should be applicable to people of all ages while around 20% (19%) thought it should only be applicable to young people. Besides, 69% supported that drug abusers irrespective of age should be given at least a chance of non-prosecution, while 26% objected to this idea. As regards the number of chances of non-prosecution to be given to drug abusers, excluding those who disagreed earlier, more than three quarters (76%) thought one chance should be given while 17% opted for two chances. Overall speaking, the average number was 1.4 chances to be given (based on 668 valid answers).
7. The Scheme also mentioned that under RDT, law enforcement officers can require a person to undergo a drug test only when there are reasonable grounds based on strong circumstantial conditions to suspect that a person has taken drugs. However, some people doubt that RDT would give law enforcement officers excessive power, and it would infringe on civil freedom and individual right. Results show that nearly half of the respondents (47%) disagreed to this saying while 36% agreed, and another 11% remained neutral. Furthermore, 64% of the respondents agreed that RDT should apply to drug consumption behavior outside Hong Kong, 25% held an opposite view and 4% chose “half-half”.

8. With respect to the effectiveness of the Scheme that aims “to identify drug abusers early and refer them to counselling and treatment programmes”, 61% of the respondents anticipated the effect would be large once the Scheme is implemented, 18% remained neutral and 13% believed the effect would be small. Lastly, 91% of the respondents expressed support to the implementation of RDT after a series of questions, with a small increment of 3 percentage points as compared to the 88% registered earlier.

Summary Table

	Support	Half-half	Oppose
Overall opinion			
Tendency to support or oppose the “RESCUE Drug Testing Scheme” (first measurement)	88%	4%	6%
Tendency to support or oppose the “RESCUE Drug Testing Scheme” (second measurement)	91%	5%	4%
Proposals about “RESCUE Drug Testing Scheme (RDT)”			
The drug testing procedures will be conducted in two stages. The person is required to undergo screening test first, only when one fails the one or more than one screening test would one’s bodily samples be collected for conducting a laboratory test.	90%	3%	5%
Those proven to be drug abusers can be eligible for a chance to receive counselling and treatment programmes in place of prosecution.	87%	3%	9%
Law enforcement officers can require that person to undergo a drug test only when the person’s physical state shows that he / she may have just taken drugs.	82%	3%	12%
Law enforcement officers can require that person to undergo a drug test only when there are substances suspected of being drugs present in the near vicinity of the person concerned.	78%	5%	14%
Drug abusers, irrespective of age, should be given at least a chance of non-prosecution	69%	3%	26%
The Scheme should apply to drug consumption that happened outside Hong Kong	64%	4%	25%
Other opinion			
RDT will give law enforcement officers excessive power, and it would infringe on civil freedom and individual right	36%	11%	47%
Expected effectiveness of the Scheme (to identify drug abusers early and refer them to counselling and treatment programmes)	61% High	18% Half-half	13% Low