



Organization of
American States

GRENDEN Annual Meeting St. Georges, Grenada

Update on activities implemented by The Inter-American
Observatory on Drugs OIA, CICAD

Pernell Clarke

Research Specialist, Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OIA)
Inter American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)
Grenada, December, 2015



Introduction to CICAD

- CICAD was created more than 20 years ago and currently serves the 34 member states of the OAS (Organization of American States)
- CICAD's core mission is to strengthen the human and institutional capabilities and harness the collective energy of its member states to reduce the production, trafficking and use and abuse of drugs in the Americas.



Organization of
American States

Introduction to the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs

- The 'OID' was created in 2000
- It is the statistics, information and research unit of CICAD
- It operates at the hemispheric level (i.e. we work to varying degrees with all countries in the hemisphere)
- Its mission is to build a drug information network for the Americas



The OIA's Mission

- **To help promote and build a drug information network for the Americas** that offers objective, reliable, up-to-date and comparative information so that member states can better understand, design and implement policies and programs to confront the drug phenomenon in all its dimensions.

FUNCTIONS OF THE OI

- **TO ASSIST MEMBER STATES TO IMPROVE THEIR CAPACITY TO COLLECT AND ANALYSE DRUG STATISTICS**
- **TO ASSIST MEMBER STATES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRUG SURVEYS AND OTHER STUDIES**
- **PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL DRUG OBSERVATORIES AND THE USE OF STANDARDISED DATA AND METHODOLOGIES**

FUNCTIONS OF THE OI

- **TO GENERATE DRUG INFORMATION THAT IS OBJECTIVE, RELIABLE, UP-TO-DATE, AND COMPARABLE**
- **TO HELP MEMBER STATES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND, DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO DEAL WITH THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF ILLEGAL DRUGS**



Organization of
American States

How to manage drug related information at the national level?

A National Drug Observatory





What is a NDO?

- A national drugs observatory (NDO) is an organisation* that aims to provide,— for its home country — factual, objective, reliable and comparable information concerning drugs and drug addiction, and their consequences.
- According to the national priorities, the scope of the work of the NDO can be only illicit drugs, or could cover also alcohol, tobacco and licit drugs.

*'Organization' is used broadly here. It could be a department consisting of one or two persons or an institution with a full staff of professionals. The context is important.



Objectives of an NDO

- to provide its national audiences with the information they need:
 - for policymaking;
 - to organise drug-related services;
 - on drug-related issues of general public interest;
- to collect and/or to produce the information needed to fulfil its country's reporting obligations to regional and international monitoring and drug-control programmes.



Core Functions of an NDO

- 1. Data collection and monitoring at the national level**
- 2. Analysis and interpretation of the information collected**
- 3. Reporting and communication of the results**



Data collection and monitoring at the national level

- Identification of national sources of drug-related information (The Information Map), and identifying their strengths and gaps.
- Establishment and maintenance of a National Drug Information Network together with the partners and resources identified in the activity above.
- Improvement of data quality.



Analysis and interpretation of the information collected

- The NDO thus acts as a knowledge broker, explaining the data to those who need to understand it.
- The NDO should utilize best available expertise in providing rigorously scientific, unbiased, and non-speculative interpretation of the data collected, and in synthesising it into structured reports, papers and other publications.



Reporting and communication of the results

- Reporting and communicating results should be seen as the most important task of the NDO.
- Ultimately, outputs are what justify the NDO's existence, and they are the reason why it receives funds from national authorities and international organizations.



Reporting and communication of the results

- The NDO must show that it has not been created for the sake of ticking a box, but for the intrinsic value of the information it generates and delivers.
- Failing to build visibility, and to demonstrate the added value of the NDO, will automatically have negative consequences for its credibility.



How to leverage drug related information at the national level?

- A drug information network:
 - A group of people who, representing either themselves or an agency, collect, analyze and disseminate information on drugs for the purpose of monitoring trends, developing policy, and implementing appropriate programs and responses.
 - [Development of Standardized Indicators](#)



Organization of
American States

Snapshot of what we do at the OID



Prison Studies

- Jamaica conducted a prison study in October 2014. The fieldwork for this project was implemented by the National Council on Drug Abuse and the Department of Corrections facilitated the process. On March 4, 2015 the results of this study were disseminated to key stakeholders and there was a discussion about the policy implications of these findings.



Local and Int'l stakeholders at the Jamaica launch



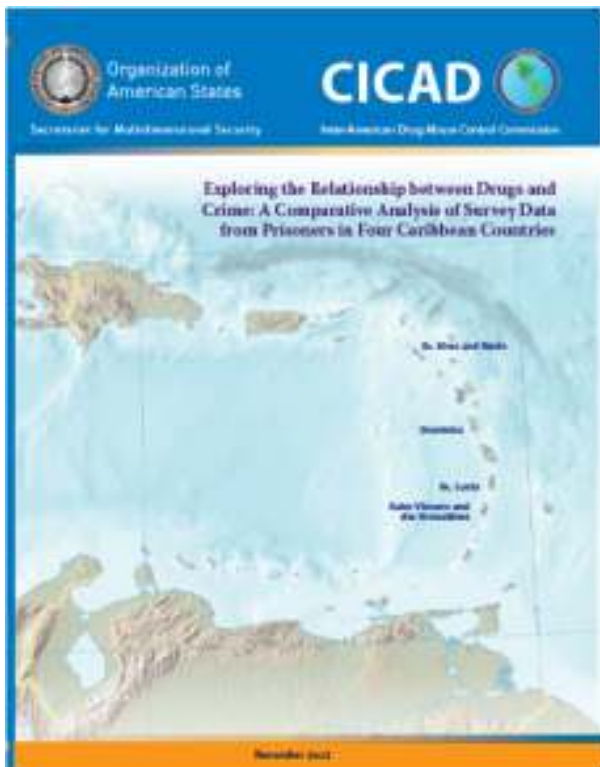


Organization of
American States

Exploring the Relationship between Drugs and Crime

A Comparative Analysis of Adult Prisoners in
Seven Caribbean Countries

Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis
St Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia
St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago





Conclusions - This study has revealed some key issues in the seven countries studied:

- Prisoners overall reported that they began to use marijuana at an early age (mean age of 14). Marijuana was, in many cases, the substance used first, even before alcohol and tobacco. Use of marijuana was prevalent among all inmates and across all categories of offense.
- Repeat offenders reported generally higher rates of drug use overall than first-time offenders, and also reported seeing more drug use inside the prison than first offenders.
- Alcohol appeared to play a significant role in crimes of physical assault, while cocaine and crack use was associated more frequently with acquisitive crimes (stealing and robbery).



Conclusions

- The research does confirm that a number of links can be established between drugs and crime
- There is sufficient evidence from the findings of this study to engage policymakers in a discussion about the clear (statistical) relationships between:
 - cocaine/crack cocaine use and repeat offending;
 - cocaine/crack use and stealing and robbery;
 - alcohol use and physical assault;
 - early initiation of drug use (especially marijuana use) and its association with criminal offending;
 - as well as the relatively high rate of criminal recidivism reported in all countries.



Conclusions

- It appears that the majority of prisoners who currently use substances in the facilities do so as a means of coping with their situation.



Implementing A Standardized Data Collection System For Drug And Alcohol Treatment Agencies

This system aims to collect information on the number and characteristics of persons who seek help for problematic drug use. This info is good for:

- Planning
- Management
- Needs Assessment
- Provide Epidemiological Indicators of drug problems
- Inform and develop drug policy

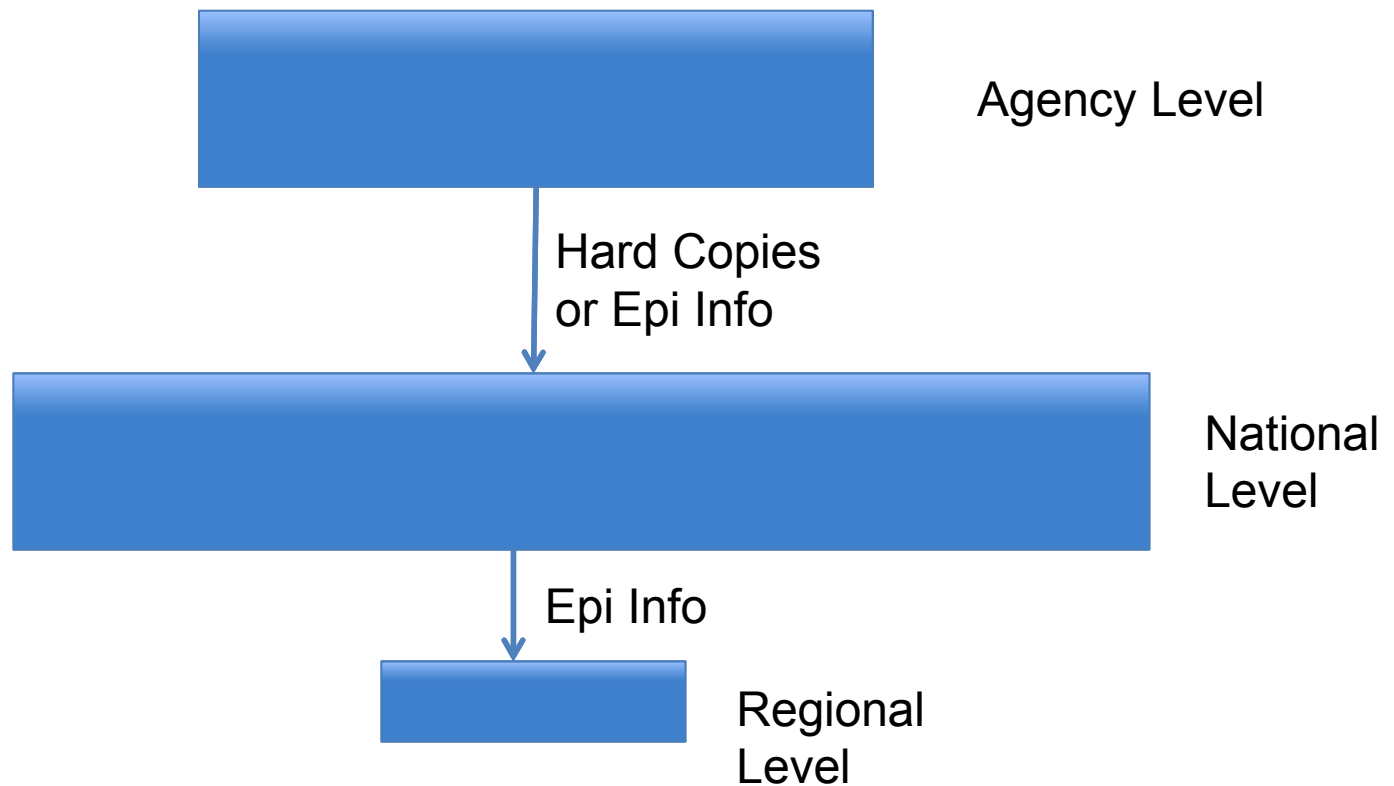


Drug Treatment data – Usefulness

- Identifying patterns of drug use
- Indirect indicator of trends in problem drug use
- Management Purposes
- Policy and Advocacy
- Identifying patterns of service utilization
- Service Evaluation



Implementation





Rationale

- Drug users are often difficult to reach
- Treatment facilities provide an opportunity to observe what would otherwise be a 'hidden' problem



The Standardized Treatment Data Protocol - Objective

- The objective of the TDP is to collect information on persons seeking treatment in all of our member states in a standardized way. This allows us to:
 - Build a profile of the demographic characteristics, drug using behaviors, and treatment history, of these persons.
 - Establish trends
 - Identify risk factors for problematic drug use.

Problematic Substance Use



Organization of
American States

- AGE OF FIRST USE
 - Most clients indicated that they started using the substance between the age of 12&13 years old
- 30 DAY DRUG Use
 - They were also using alcohol, tobacco and marijuana

Most were encouraged/referred to treatment by family member or general health centre

About 40% received previous treatment for problematic drug use

Other Characteristics



Organization of
American States

- About 35% of clients were arrested at least once in their lifetime
- Approximately 20% were treated for a psychiatric condition
- Most were referred to a residential treatment program



On-going support for Treatment

Data

- To date, 11 countries are participating in this project
- To facilitate continued growth and improvement of this process, the OIA organizes an annual workshop for both treatment providers and drug council representatives.
- In May, 2015 this workshop was held in St. Lucia.



Participants – St. Lucia Seminar





Biggest take-aways from St. Lucia

Event:

- There is a dire need for the implementation of standards of care for drug treatment facilities in this region.
- Capacity building to ensure that these standards are met.
- The next step involves the evaluation of treatment outcomes

On-going support



Organization of
American States

- In addition, we have held working meetings and training sessions with treatment providers in The Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, and Jamaica in this calendar year alone.
- And we are currently working on a database with information from thousands of persons who sought treatment in 11 countries in this region during Jan to Jun, 2015.



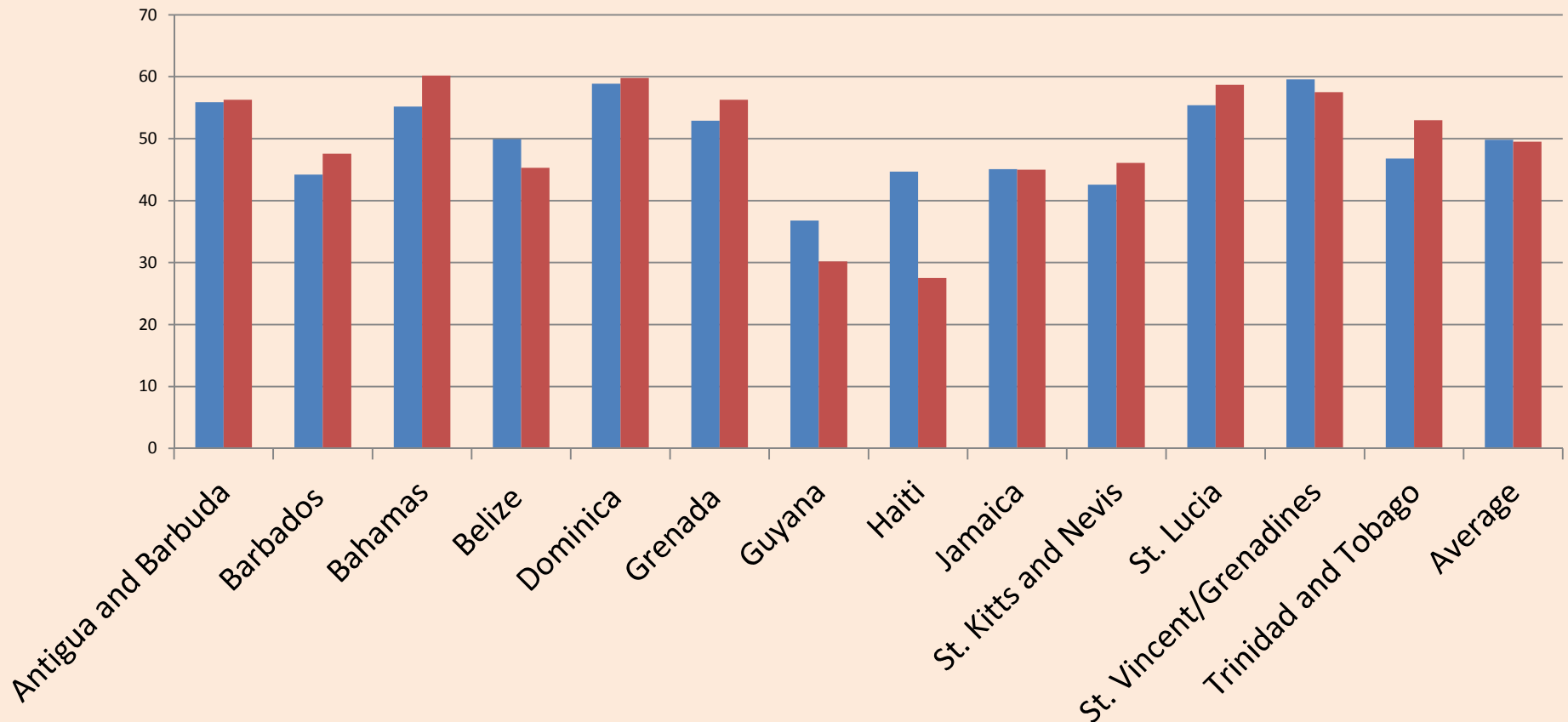
School surveys

- We recently completed surveys in 11 Caribbean countries in 2013 and 2014.
- We are going to be publishing a comparative analysis report on drug use among school students in the Caribbean, the second of its kind.
- We participated in national school survey report launches in Barbados and Guyana during this year.



Past Year Prevalence of Alcohol Use by Gender

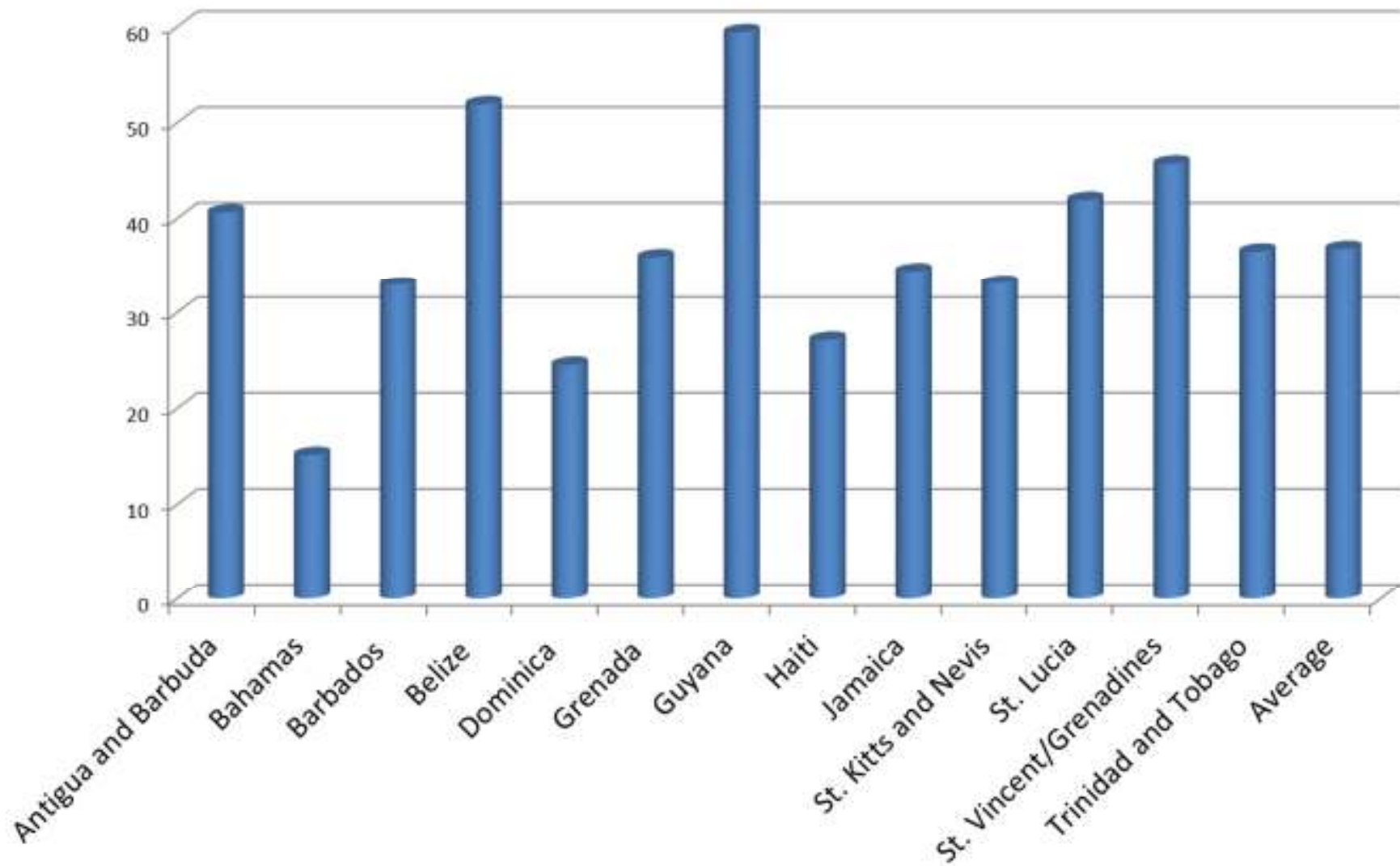
■ males ■ females



Binge Drinking



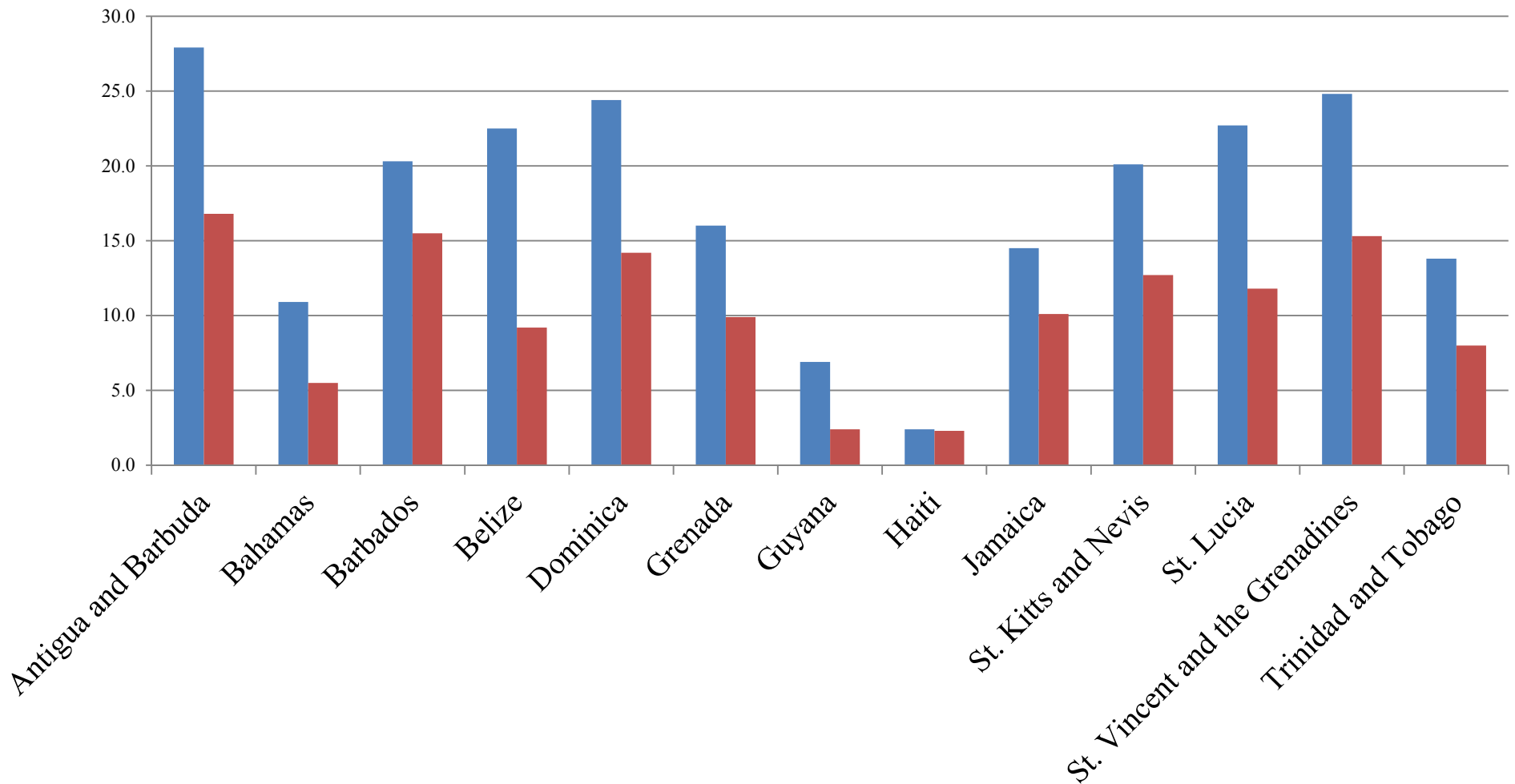
Organization of
American States





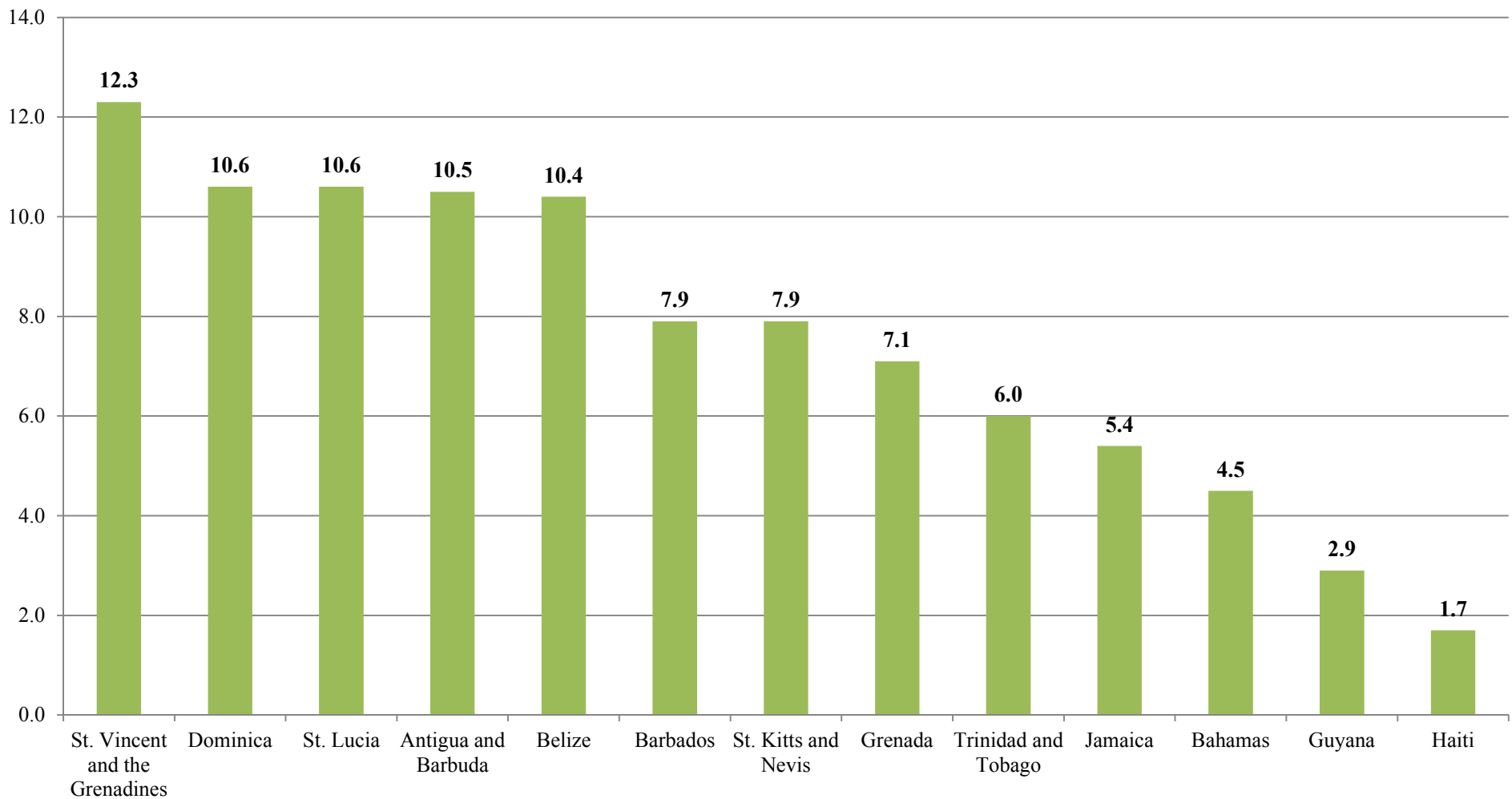
Past Year Marijuana Use by Gender

■ males ■ females



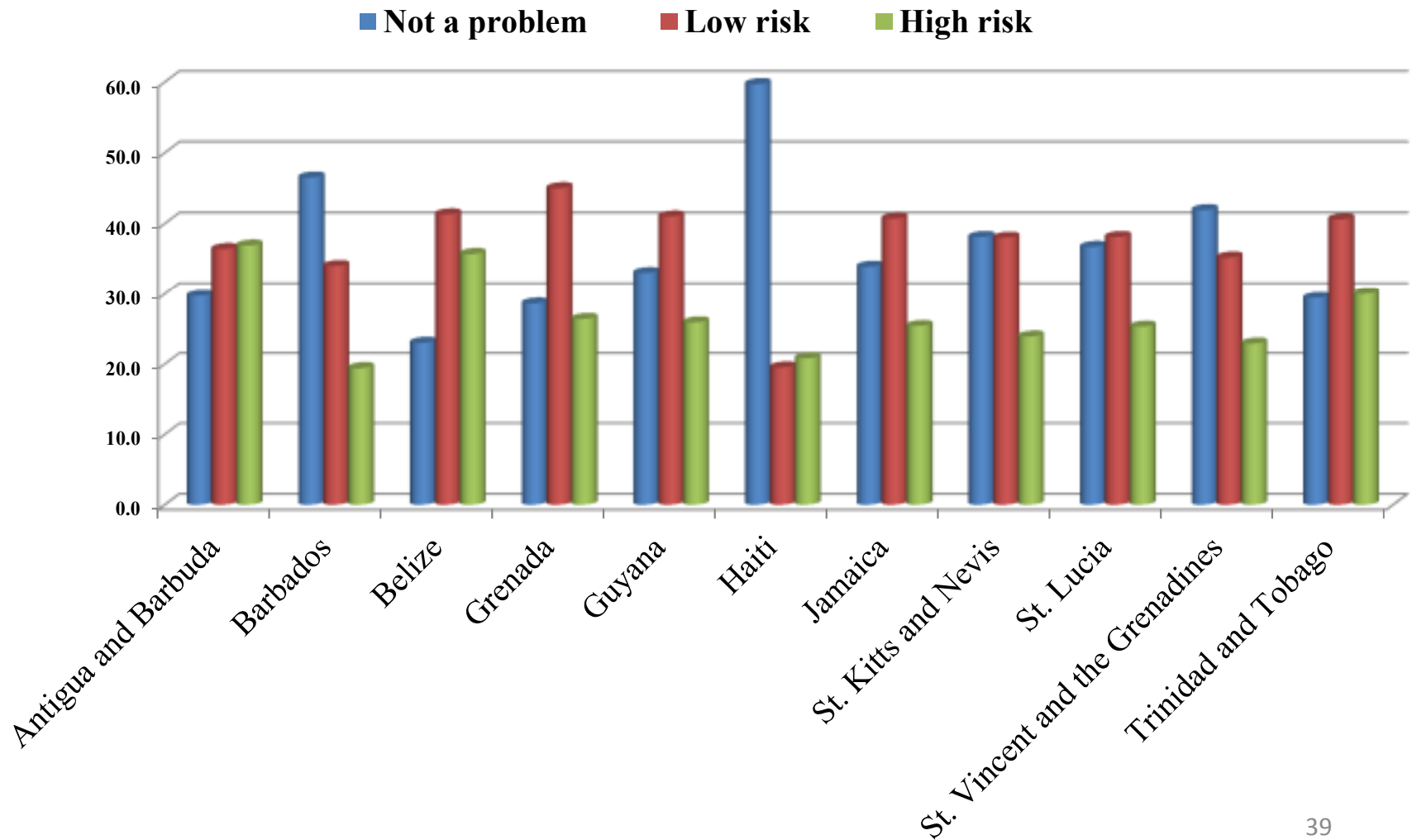


Past Year Marijuana Prevalence for Students 14 Years or Younger



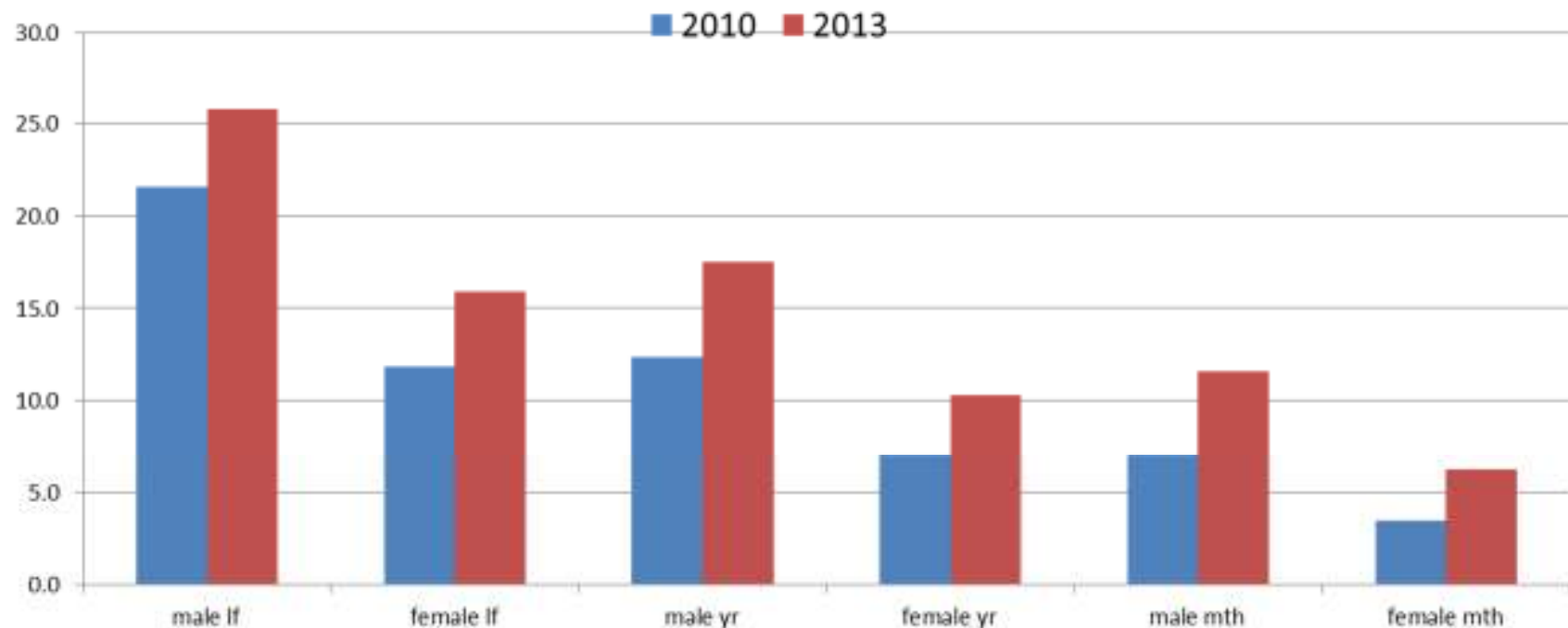


Cannabis Abuse Screening Test (CAST)



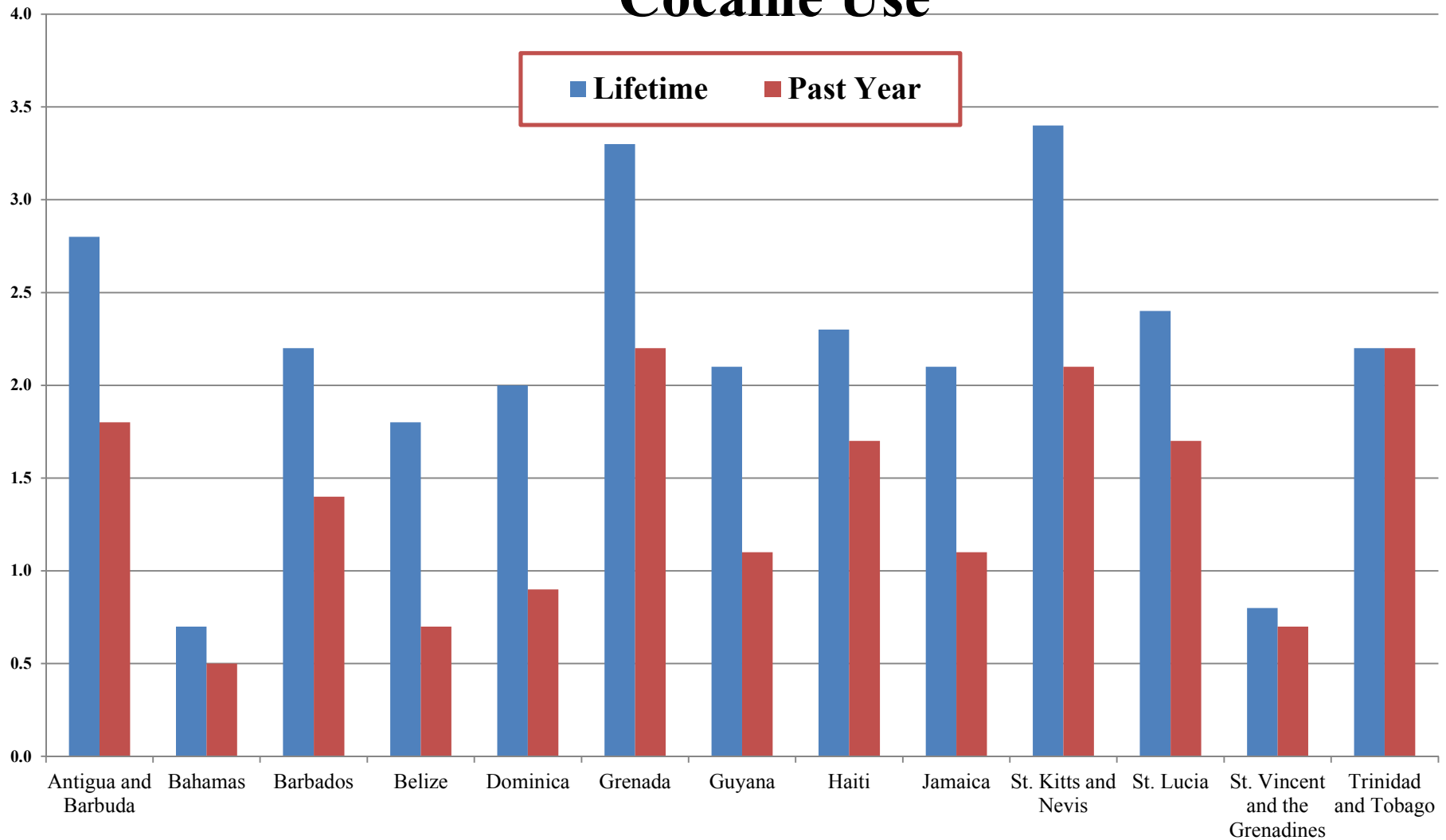


Comparison of Marijuana Use among Gender - Overall Average Prevalence



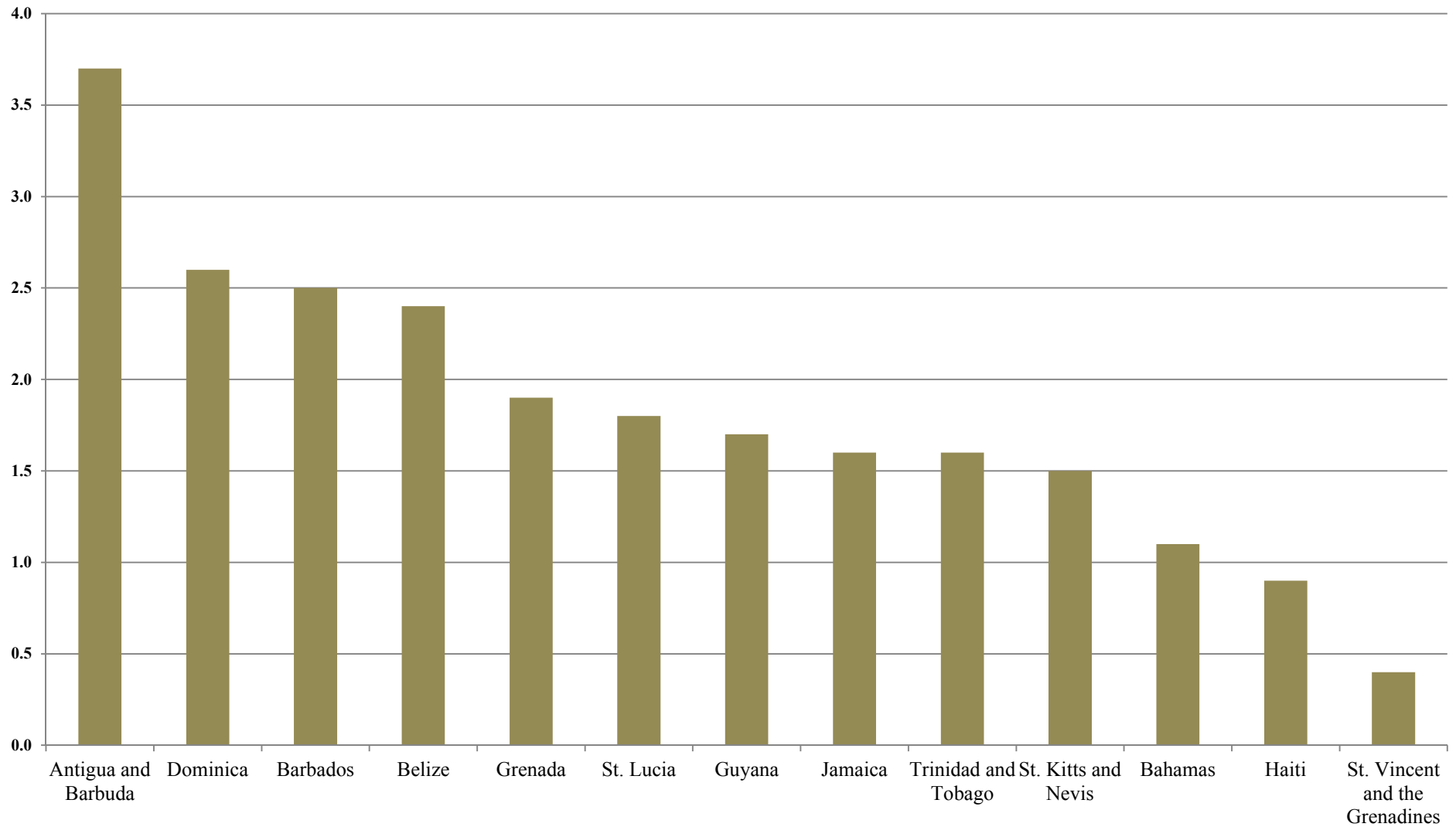


Lifetime and Past Year Prevalence of Crack Cocaine Use





Lifetime Prevalence of Ecstasy





Analysis of Results

- By far the most widely consumed substance is alcohol and this is followed by marijuana.
- Prevalence is relatively high but there is plenty of variability from country to country.
- Marijuana is the most widely used illegal substance and in most cases, its use is even more prevalent than tobacco.



Analysis of Results

- A very important finding relates to students perception of how easy it is to access drugs.
- Perception of availability of marijuana was very high-- four to five of every ten students indicated that they could access marijuana easily in most of the countries.
- Additionally, the perception of harm associated with marijuana appears to be declining among secondary school students



Analysis of Results

- Many students do not know the dangers of:
 - frequent misuse of prescription drugs
 - occasional or frequent use of inhalants
 - occasional or frequent use of ecstasy
- The most important finding about marijuana was that in most countries there was an increase in prevalence when compared to the 2010 report and at the same time there was a decline in the harm associated with marijuana use.



Policy Implications

- There are serious prevention education implications for the findings related to perception of harm related to substance use.
- In relation to other regions, the prevalence of use of some of these substances particularly marijuana and inhalants, is relatively high.
- The age of first use estimates are fairly consistent across countries so the specific point in time where prevention programs intervene can also be fairly uniform. The primary school secondary school transition is a critical time for intervention.



General Population Surveys

- Currently working on surveys in:
 - Suriname
 - Guyana,
 - Jamaica
 - The Bahamas



Thank you for your attention
Pernell Clarke
CICAD, OAS
pclarke@oas.org