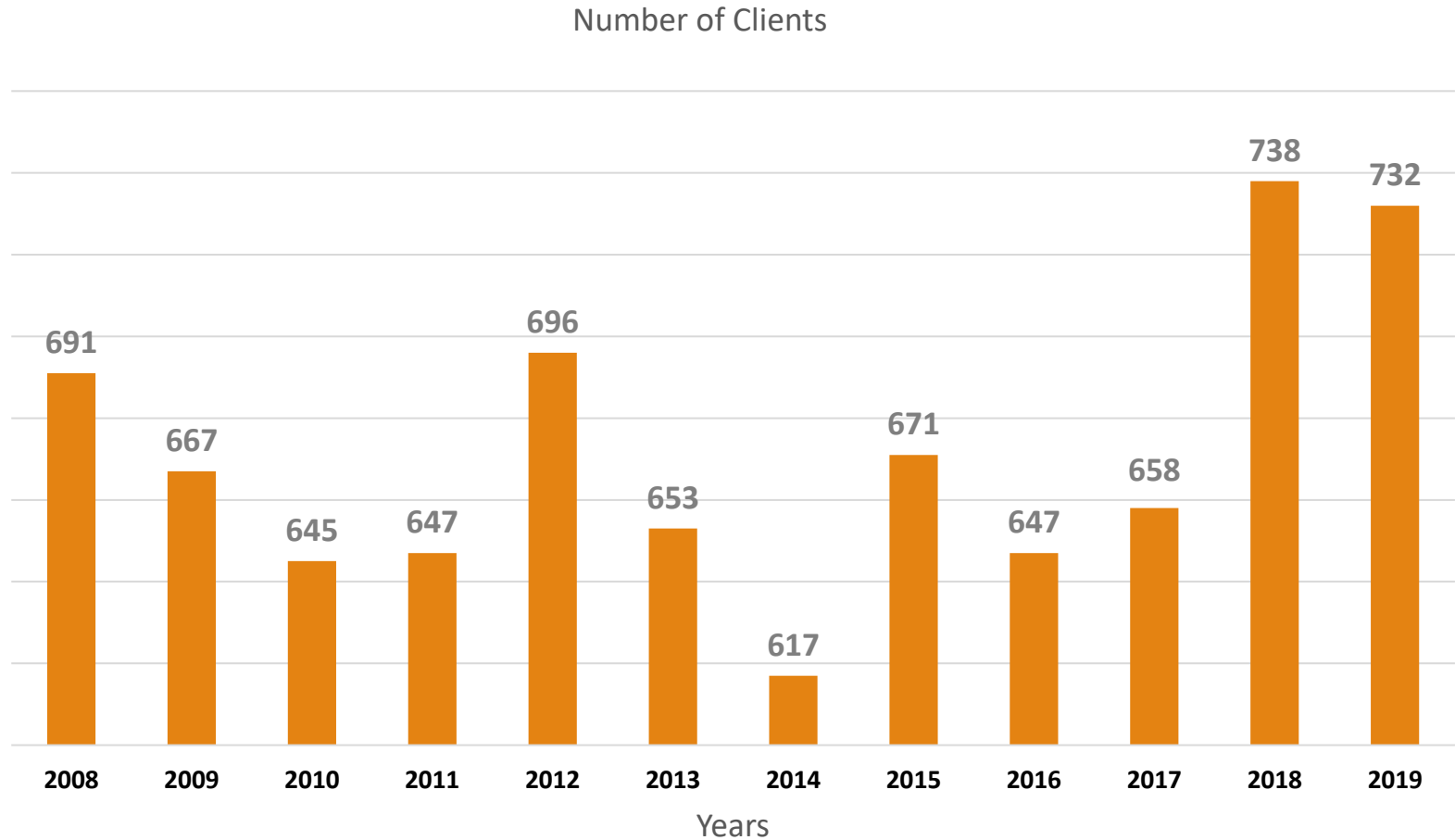




Cannabis Debate

22nd April 2021

Clients making use of New Hope services



* Returning clients: 546

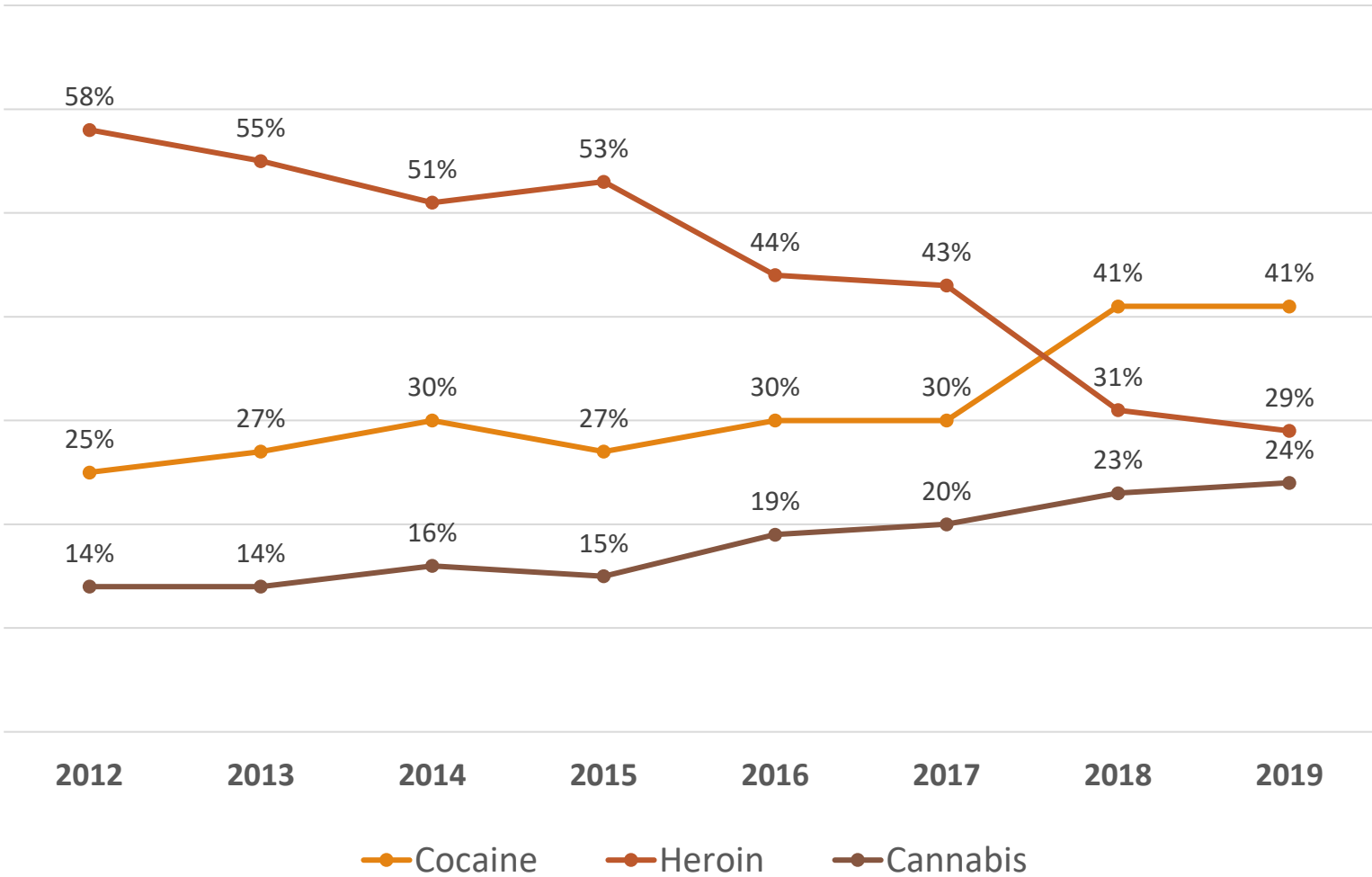
* New clients: 186



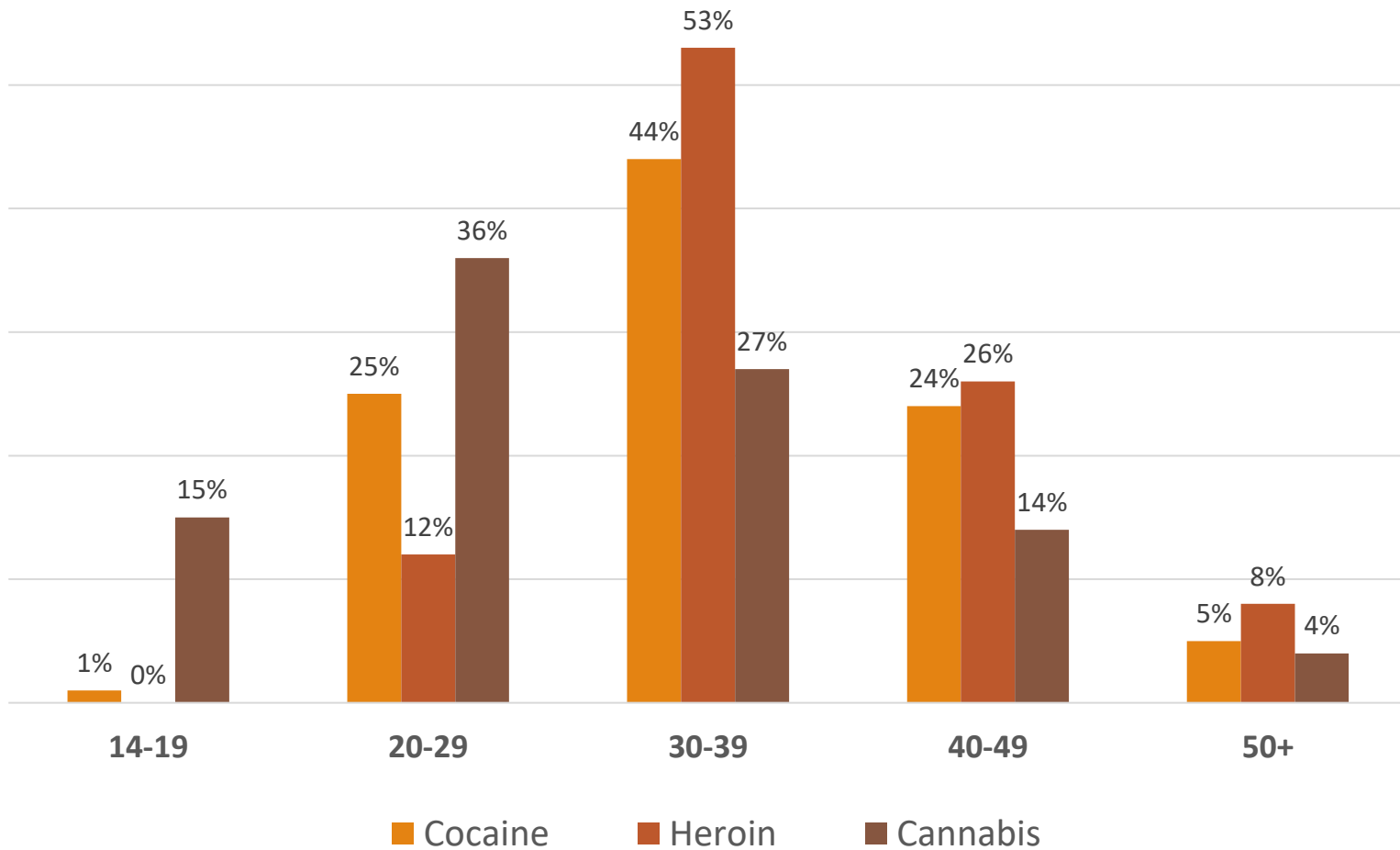
DRUG TRENDS

2019

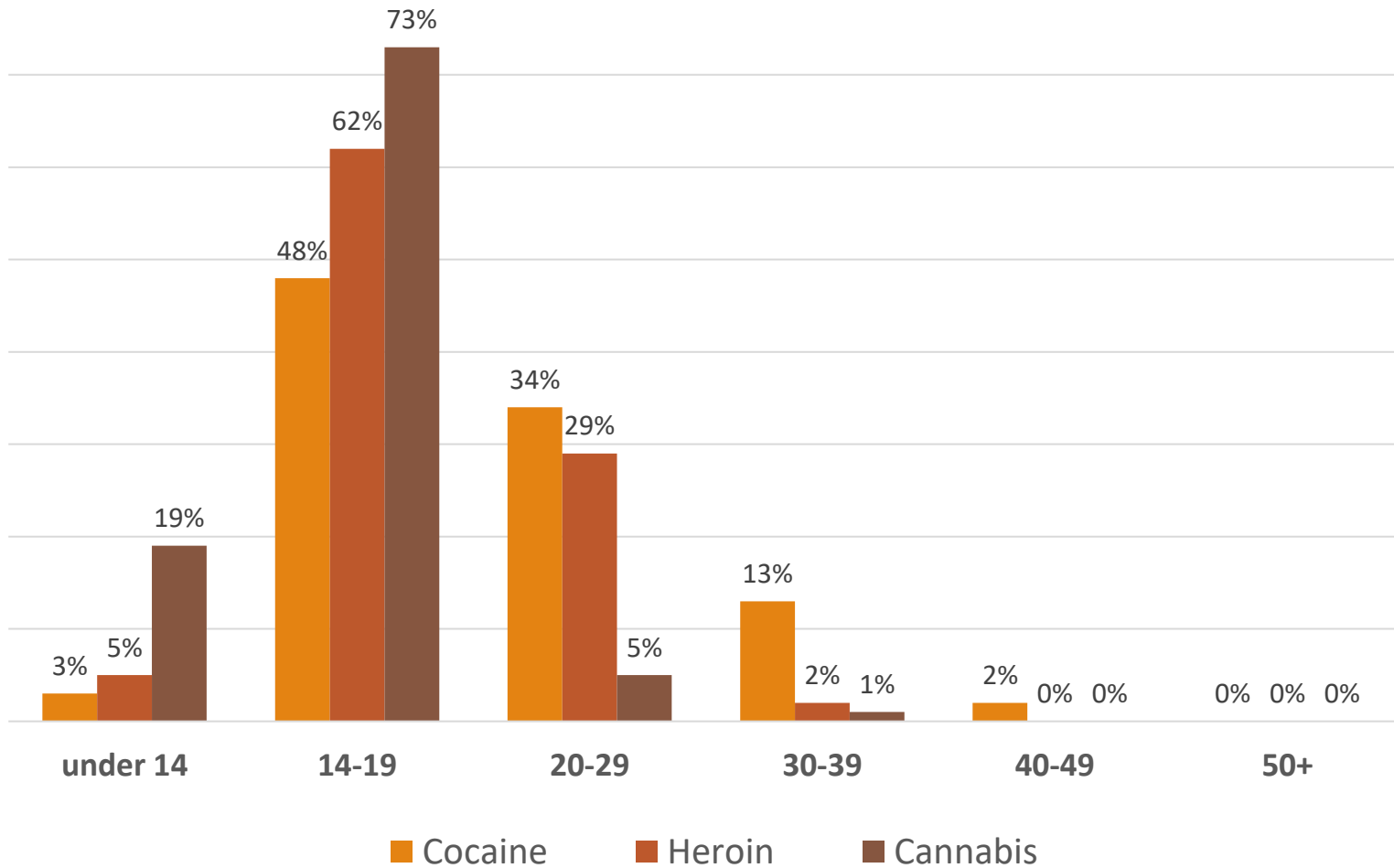
Drug Trends for 2019



Preferred Drug by Age (when using the service)



Preferred Drug by Age of First Use



Cannabis Use in Malta

Source	Age Group	Year	%
ESPAD	15-16	2019	12%
General Population Survey	18-64	2013	4.5%
MaltaToday survey	18-65+	2019	9.4%

Data – Minors Drugs Tribunal

Commissioner for Justice – Drugs Tribunal

Sep 2015 to June 2020 – Under 18 – 228 Cases

Arguments

1. Cannabis is a natural substance with effects ranging from medicinal for some to very severe harm for others.
2. Cannabis is mistakenly referred to as soft drug. Cannabis with high THC levels, heavy use, adolescent use and use by those who are exposed to risk of dependence and mental health problems, makes it as hard a drug as ever.
3. Cannabis is a natural substance with effects ranging from medicinal for some to very severe harm for others.
4. While cannabis is not a gate-way drug for the majority of users, it can act as a gate-way drug for adolescent users and for those at risk of developing dependence.
5. The argument for regularising cannabis because of increased use does not hold – this equates to a raising of a white flag and popularising the drug further.
6. While Regularisation of Cannabis is intended to offer safer use and the separation of markets, it will contribute to a lifting of prohibition and those who experience ill effects of the drug (even in mild forms) will have less reason to quite the habit.
7. While the setting of age limits, stricter and more severe consequences for those who don't abide with the law would be called for with regularisation, there is a reasonable concern about failed regulation and enforcement.
8. If Cannabis loses some of the attractiveness as a 'forbidden fruit' – what will replace it? For thrill seeking cannabis users (be they adolescents or adults), the graduation to other popular drugs, like cocaine, could be faster.
9. The lifting of prohibition can bring increased use of cannabis and other drugs. Limit setting has an impact on behaviour.
10. There is money to be made by the country out of taxation, and drug tourism, while the cannabis black market will take a hit. This too comes with unforeseen costs on society while the black market will adapt.
11. Harm reduction advocates nurture the expectation that with legalisation people will go for the natural substance and avoid the very harmful/lethal synthetic version of the drug. This might be difficult to predict as the effects are reported to be different and persons might acquire a specific attraction for synthetic drugs effects.

Current Picture – Drugs Tribunal

Those who are chaotic don't pay contravention (first time use)

At times is a shock if imprisoned or called to Tribunal – Turning point

Contravention personal use – 75 to 125euros – More than cigarette

Users are using cannabis prescription in road blocks

Users are using cannabis prescription at DORB

Inadvertant Effects of Legalisation of Cannabis

Adolescents 1 in 6 – Develop Dependency (Gateway ?)

Age Limits – 18 / 21 / 25yrs ?

THC (4% - 24%) - Soft vs Hard Drug

Drug Pushers – runners with quantities established by law

Speed up experimentation process – move to cocaine faster.

Failed Regulation – Resouces to Enforce?

Smoking at home in presence of children? – How do you enforce?

Driving when intoxicated? – How to enforce?

Cannabis Plant!



Recommendations

- * 1st Time offenders can be referred to DORB at discretion of Commissioner in serious cases or prescribed assessment
- * OR - 1st Time offenders demanded assessment for drug use 3 to 4 sessions
- * More elbow space for Judiciary
- * Impact Assessment
- * **DEPENDS ON WHERE WE WANT TO GO**