

# COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT



**"The war on drugs is 1 of the most useless wastes of taxpayer money & government time. Ask America. Fighting drugs is really pointless. Just legalise them & move on."**

Twitter, English





# FACT CHECKING

- The rumour is important as it has emerged at a time when drug abuse is a rising concern in the country. In 2020 government launched the 2020-2025 National Drug Masterplan aimed at tackling various drug related issues. Implementation of this initiative has been rather slow and resultantly there is an upsurge in drug and substance abuse in Zimbabwe.
- The proliferation of illegal drugs coupled with drug and substance abuse among children was exposed when eight students were expelled from Dominican Convent High school in Harare for drug possession. On February 4, 2023, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) stepped up its operations against drug lords by launching an anti-drug trafficking campaign dubbed "No to dangerous drugs and illicit substances". ZRP have so far arrested 636 drug peddlers nationwide.
- According to Romio Matshazi, a Drug Prevention activist, the war on drugs is pivotal and collaborative efforts between key stakeholders such as communities, government and organisations implementing drug and substance abuse awareness programs will help decrease drug and substance abuse.
- On the other hand, Mr Wilson Box from Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network (ZCLDN) asserts that criminalisation of people who use drugs is a futile attempt because this approach has failed worldwide. Sibusiso Bhebhe, Executive Director from Dot Youth also highlights that arrests against drug peddlers are ineffective as they do not address why the youths are abusing drugs.

The National Mental Health Manager in the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), Fabian Musoro, said government is making efforts to deal with the drug problem through working with the Global Fund in rolling out the Mental Health Gap programme (mhGAP) to address prevalent mental health conditions such as substance abuse.

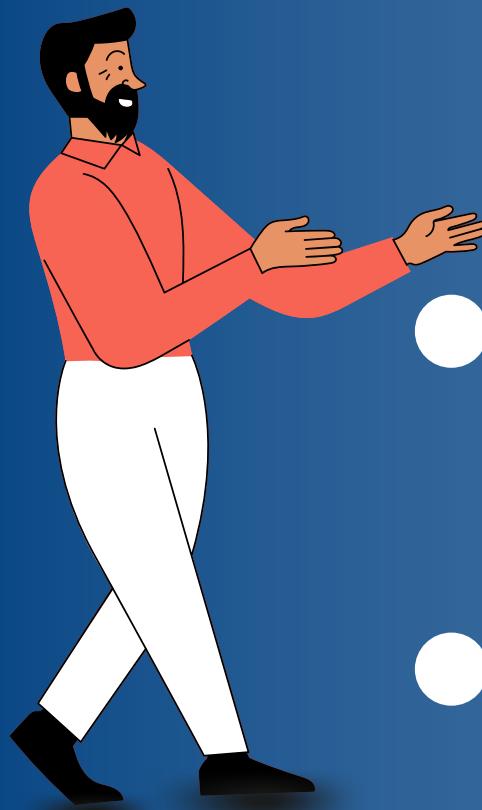
The decriminalisation of drugs particularly in Oregon, United States of America (USA) through Measure 110 that makes possession of small amounts of cocaine, heroin, LSD and methamphetamine, among other drugs, punishable by a civil citation like a parking ticket and a \$100 fine, resulted in increased drug consumption as it does not force patients to seek help. Portugal on the other hand decriminalised public and private use, acquisition, and possession of all drugs in 2000 and adopted an approach focused on public health rather than public-order priorities resulting in a reduction in drug use prevalence, which stayed reasonably low when compared to other European countries.

Research by the World Health Organisation (WHO) indicates that over 50% of patient admissions in Zimbabwe's mental health centres are associated with drug abuse and of those 80% of them are between 16-35 age group.





# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITIES



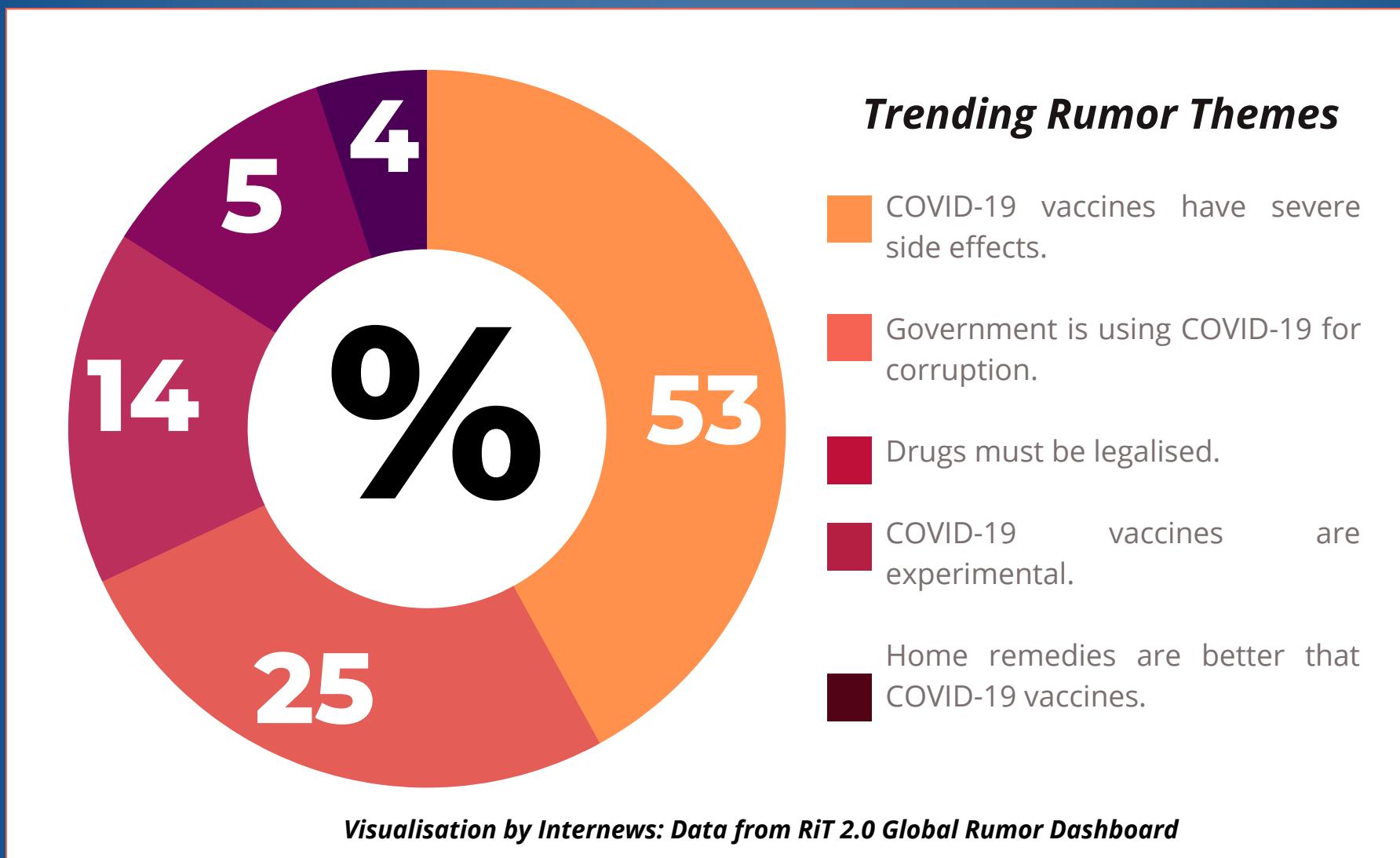
- **Community health workers can raise awareness** on the negative effects of drug and substance abuse by sharing Information Education and Communication material (IEC) written in local languages such as Tonga, Venda, Kalanga, Sotho, Nambya, Ndebele, and Shona highlighting the impact of drug and substance abuse on health and society such as lung and heart disease, cancer, mental health conditions, poor relationships and criminality.
- **Community outreach workers can use community dialogues** focusing on youths, men, women and migrants to raise awareness on facilitators of drug and substance abuse such as Vuzu parties in Bulawayo, advantages of anti-drug campaigns, sharing information on rehabilitative interventions being implemented in communities.
- **Community outreach workers can target migrants at local border entry points** such as Beitbridge, Plumtree and Victoria Falls by sharing IEC material in local languages raising awareness on effects of drug and substance abuse and the importance of preventing drug use and smuggling.

## Organisations working on Drug and Substance Abuse in Zimbabwe

ORGANISATION	CONTACT PERSON	EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER
Dot Youth	Sibusiso Bhebhe	sibusiso@dotyouthzim.org.zw	0773380694
Active Youth Zimbabwe	Romeo Matshazi	directorayz@gmail.com	0779728662
CADASA Trust	Mazvita Shonhiwa	cadasatrust@gmail.com	0716 867 960



# RUMOUR TRENDS



Between February 1, and February 7, 2023, Internews in Zimbabwe collected 74 COVID-19 rumors.

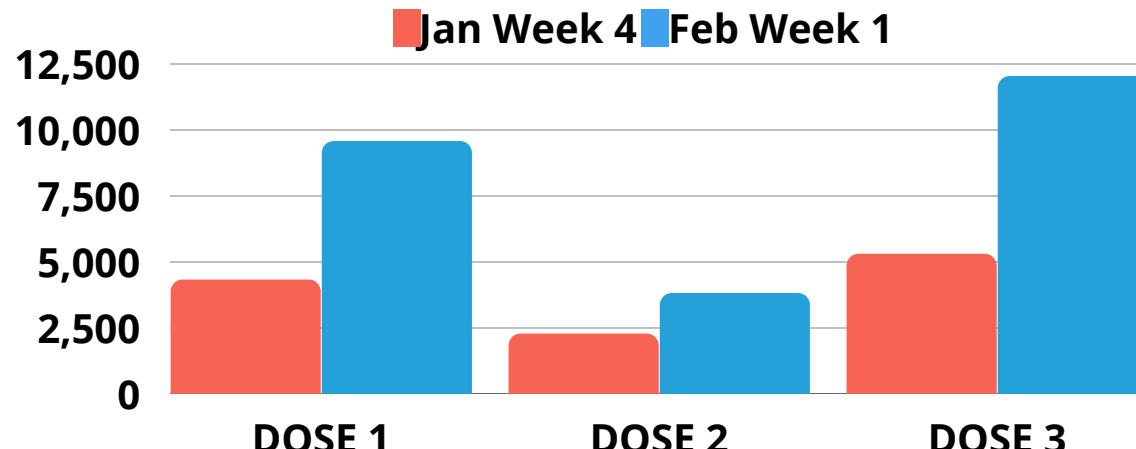


Thirty rumors were collected online (Facebook: Three (3) and Twitter: 27) and 44 through in-person interaction. Trending rumor themes were, "COVID-19 vaccines have severe side effects" (53%), "Government is using COVID-19 for corruption" (25%), "Drugs must be legalised" (14%), "COVID-19 vaccines are experimental" (5%) and that "Home remedies are better than COVID-19 vaccines" (5%).



# COVID-19 TRENDS

## Week-on-week Comparison



Source: Visualisation by Internews: Data by Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC)

- Zimbabwe recorded a 121% increase in first vaccine dose uptake from 4,330 doses administered in week four of January 2023 to 9,576 doses in week one of February 2023.
- There was a 67% and 126% increase in the uptake of second and third vaccine doses respectively. Second vaccine dose uptake increased from 2,281 to 3,814 doses while third vaccine dose uptake increased from 5,307 to 12,040 doses.
- The surge in the new COVID-19 infections witnessed since the beginning of 2023 could have triggered the increase in vaccination rates as people seek protection from increased COVID-19 infections.
- New COVID-19 cases increased by 18% from 801 cases recorded in week four to 946 recorded in week one.
- As of February 7, 2023, there were 1,216 active COVID-19 cases with 34 hospitalisations (26 vaccinated and eight unvaccinated). One COVID-19 related death was recorded during week one of February 2023.
- As of February 7, 2023, Zimbabwe has cumulatively administered 6,608,607 first vaccine doses and 4,966,725 second vaccine doses, translating to 49.6% of the 10 million herd immunity target initially set for end December 2022. A total of 1,312,817 people has received the third vaccine dose.