

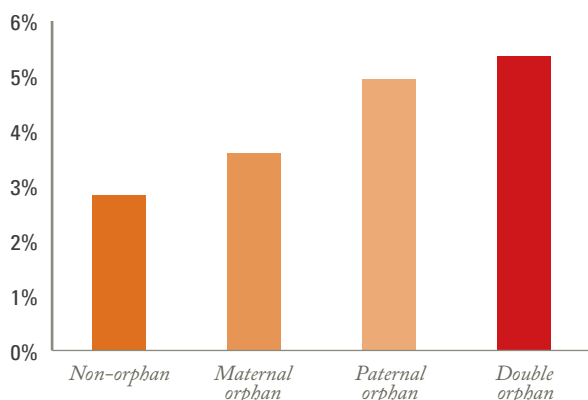


Policy Brief

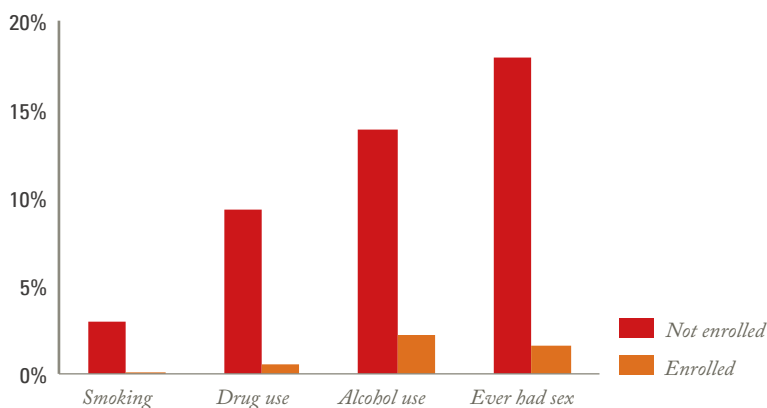
Substance abuse and education in orphans and vulnerable children

Citation: Pufall, EL, Robertson, L, Mushati, P, Sherr, L, Nyamukapa, C, Gregson, S, 2014. *Protective effect of school enrolment against substance abuse in orphans and vulnerable children from rural eastern Zimbabwe*. Under review.

Percent of males who reported drug use



Percent of male OVC who engaged in behaviour



Alcohol and drug use amongst adolescents and young adults in sub-Saharan Africa is a potential problem, particularly among orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), and may be ameliorated by school enrolment, but there are no published findings from Zimbabwe on this. We collected data from 5,297 adolescents and young adults from 2009–2011 to investigate whether orphans and/or children caring for a family member with HIV are at increased risk of alcohol, tobacco and drug use.

The questions:

- Are OVC at an increased risk for smoking and alcohol and drug* use?
- Do OVC who practice substance use have greater HIV risk behaviour?
- Does school enrolment reduce substance use in OVC (thereby potentially reducing HIV risk behaviour)?

* Believed to be mainly marijuana in this population

The research:

- 2009–2011: Interviewed 3,274 young adults aged 15–19 as part of a general household survey.
- Collected data on smoking cigarettes, alcohol consumption, using drugs for pleasure and HIV sexual risk behaviours.
- All analyses control for age, gender, socio-economic status and community type.





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Finding 1: Male orphans are at an increased risk for drug use

- Few females (<1%) reported substance use.
- Males who are maternal orphans and all double orphans were significantly more likely to report drug use than non-orphans.
- OVC status had no effect on tobacco or alcohol use.
- Children/adolescents caring for sick adults in their households were not found to be at an increased risk of drug use.

Finding 2: Substance use was positively associated with HIV risk behaviours in males

- Substance use was positively associated with early sexual debut, number of sexual partners and transactional sex.

Finding 3: School enrolment was associated with lower substance use in males

- School enrolment was significantly associated with lower drug and alcohol use.
- School enrolment was negatively associated with ever having had sex, the effect of which decreased after adjusting for substance use.

CONCLUSIONS:

- Substance use is rare in female OVC from Manicaland.
- In males, OVC status has no apparent effect on smoking or drinking, but is associated with drug use.
- Substance use is associated with HIV risk behaviours.
- In males, school enrolment is associated with lower levels of drinking and drug use, but not smoking.
- Education may moderate the relationship between parental loss, substance use and sexual risk behaviours for HIV infection.
- Increases in school enrolment could be a potential way to decrease substance use and abuse among OVC, with the potential to also decrease HIV risk.

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