

## Drugs and crime

### What are the links between drugs and crime?

#### Issues around drugs and crime

#### Drug addicts commit crime to support their habit

It isn't all drug users who commit 'acquisitive' crime such as burglary. In fact, it is only a very small percentage of those who have tried drugs who are also involved in acquisitive crime. Those who are most likely to commit such crimes are people who are dependent on heroin, other opiates or crack cocaine (not cocaine powder), and it's also true that even people addicted to these drugs don't always turn to crime to support their habit.

Finally, research has shown that even many of those who do fund drug habits through crime were involved in such crime before they became drug-dependent. In other words, addictive drug use may accelerate pre-existing crime careers, rather than trigger them. While addicted drug use may increase the level of criminal activity in some people, it seldom causes people to become criminals. Treatment - such as **methadone maintenance** - tends to reduce the level of criminal activity back to pre-drug levels.

#### Levels of drug related criminality may be greatly exaggerated

It isn't uncommon for claims to be made that drug addicts, in a particular police district, are committing up to 80% of burglaries. Such figures however are not based upon definite data/knowledge but have often been constructed using inaccurate definitions of drug using behaviour. Such claims also often muddle up cause and correlation. Research does indeed suggest that over half of arrested offenders have used illegal drugs within a few hours of their arrest - usually cannabis. The proportion of arrestees who are regular users of heroin or crack/cocaine is much smaller - probably under a fifth of the total.

#### References

Van Beusekom, I. & Iguchi, M. (2001) A Review of Recent Advances in Knowledge About Methadone Maintenance Treatment, RAND. <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1396/>

Coid J, Carvell A, Kittler Z, Healey A and Henderson J. (2000) The impact of methadone treatment on drug misuse and crime. Home Office Research Findings no. 120

Parker, H. and Kirby, P. (1996) Methadone Maintenance and Crime Reduction on Merseyside, Police Research Group - Crime Detection and Prevention Series Paper 72A Publication of the Home Office Police Policy Directorate Police Research Group <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/prgpdfs/cdp72bf.pdf>

#### Related Links:



[How much crime is drug related?](#) When we think of the links between drugs and crime we usually think about dependent users of drugs like heroin and crack cocaine...

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