

How illicit drugs effect crime rates



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What are illicit (illegal) drugs? How do illicit drugs affect the crime rate? How do illicit drugs alter one's mind and behavior? These are all questions I am going to discuss during this research paper. If you are like any other young adult in America, you have heard of illicit drugs either through school program awareness or by being exposed to them during your life. Illicit drugs can be referred to as psychoactive drugs, meaning they can alter your biological, psychological, and/or sociological view worldwide, as well as your behavior. Psychoactive defines as influencing of the brain, explaining the difference in behavior and experiences while under the influence of such drugs.

Illicit drugs are substances that can stimulate, hinder, or cause hallucinate effects on the central nervous system. Some examples of illicit drugs are marijuana, cocaine, LSD, PCP, mushrooms, pain relievers, methamphetamine, heroin, and many more. With illicit drugs' come drug abuse which then leads to drug offenses. People who participate in the activity of illicit drugs often commit crimes within their community. There are 3 drug-related offense's abusers often display, (1) drug defined offenses, (2) drug-related offenses, and (3) drug-using lifestyle (NIDA 2014). An example of drug-related offenses is an individual not having money to feed their addiction, then turning to robbing or stealing to meet the financial needs of their addiction. Drug-defined offenses are sales or possession of drugs and drug-using lifestyle comes from an someone being subjected to criminals, and their behavior with the use of drugs. It is not uncommon for an individual to have committed a crime to either had use of illicit drugs prior or currently under the influence. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, it was

reported in 2004 that 26% of Federal inmates were under the influence during the offense, 50% reported to misuse of illicit drugs during the month before (BJS 2007).

The most recent survey conducted by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health was done in 2016 and estimates that 1 in 10 Americans, 28.6 million, 12 and older have used an illicit drug in the past month (SAMHSA 2017). 24.0 million, Americans aged 12 or older reported misuse of marijuana, 6.2 million reported misuse of psychotherapeutic drugs (i. e. ADHD medication), 3.3 million reported misuse of pain relievers, 2.0 million reported misuse of tranquilizers (i. e., anxiety or sleep medication), 1.7 million reported misuse of stimulants (i. e. meth), 1.9 million reported misuse of cocaine, 432,000 of crack misused, 475,000 reported misuse of heroin, 1.4 million reported misuse of hallucinogens (i. e. MDMA, LSD, PCP, etc.) and 600,000 reported misuse of inhalants, all these statistics is in Americans aged 12 or older (SAMHSA 2017).

As with anything, where there is demand, there will be supply. Unfortunately, illicit drugs are everywhere and there are people all around the world demanding for more drugs to support their addiction. Despite what region, there will be someone trafficking, distributing, and selling drugs. Despite the hurdles one has to go through to produce the supply for demand of illicit drugs, it gets done at a high price. As stated in our text, Levinthal 2016, there are 2 factors working against the police to stop the supply and demand on drugs. First is the illicit drug trade adapting to constant changing circumstances of law enforcement. Somehow, these offenders can be a step ahead of law enforcement. They know they cannot use a site for too long

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without risking the chance of being caught. These drug sites are mobile and can be moved in hours. If one area has a drug enforcement effort, another area will step up and distribute their drugs to make up for the demand since their area has a lower chance of risks. Second factor being there is few ways available to drug trafficking routes. With the drug trade always on the move, all law enforcement has to go off of is past and present routes to try to figure out the next. In the past, it used to be just one drug in trafficking from a certain region, however, in recent findings multiple drugs are being trafficked at a time.

Other crimes than trafficking drugs are ones committed to obtain drugs. In an article written by Buddy T., a founding member of the online AA outreach committee, states that 17% of state inmates and 18% of federal inmates committed their crimes so as to obtain drugs (verywellmind. com). Property crimes and drug offenses are more committed by drug offenders looking for money, than public disorder. With a survey done, he reports that 56% of robbery and weapon violations were committed by inmates who were under the influence while committing the crime, and 55% having committed burglary and motor theft.

Some known ways of trafficking illicit drugs are by foot, plane, cargo vessels, submarines, tunnels, and private and commercial vehicles. If there are a few drugs to be delivered over a border, it is usually done by illegal aliens or migrant workers looking to make some extra cash. They will hide the drugs in their backpacks or the soles of their shoes. Sometimes, migrant workers who have no choice, mainly women, are forced to swallow bags of the drugs to deliver them to the destination.

The private and commercial vehicles have hidden compartments on them to smuggle the drugs inside. When the smuggling technique by a plane is used, the drugs are often wrapped in waterproof bundles and dropped from a plane to a coordinate either in the ocean for a fishing vessel to seize or on vacant land to be delivered. Tunnels are another means for trafficking drugs. From 2008-2013, ICE, DEA, and Customs and Border Protections closed down 75 cross-border tunnels, most of which were in California and Arizona (p. 35, Levinthal).

With drug trafficking, comes violence. Many gang members who distributed drugs, often used violence as scar tactics. For example, Pablo Escobar. He was notorious for the use of violence on any and every one who stepped in his path. He did not care who you were, if you were trying to mess with his trade, he would often have his members reminded you who he was or even assassination, this issue includes police, judges, journalists, anyone (p. 34, Levinthal). To this day, Mexico is the biggest actor in trafficking illicit drugs to the United States. “ The statistics of drug-related violence in Mexico is staggering. There have been more than 60, 000 casualties over a six-year period, from 2006-2012, many reported as ‘ disappearances’”(p. 38, Levinthal). Many people are kidnapped, usually someone related to an individual who is caught up in the drug world, and killed.

The human brain is fascinating. There are so many different things going on inside the central nervous system, it’s similar to todays electronics. So many different panels and switches. In the human brain, we have neurons that act as a switch to transfer and control retained information. The neuron delivers neurotransmitters to other cells and then having transporters take the

neurotransmitters back to the neuron that released it. When a person takes drugs, the chemicals of the drugs are sent through the blood stream into the central nervous system in the brain. It then goes to the neurons to start the cycle of sending and receiving. Although some drugs like marijuana and heroin can mimic chemicals of the brain, it doesn't signal natural neurotransmitters, whereas drugs like amphetamines are similar to the natural neurotransmitters which in turn increases the number of natural neurotransmitters affecting the transfer process to the neurons (NIDA 2018).

Drugs alter 3 parts of the brain, (1) the basal ganglia, (2) the extended amygdala, and (3) the prefrontal cortex. The basal ganglia activate motivation and pleasurable activities, giving the reward affect. So, when drug abuse is present, what once seemed like a reward then, will later need a higher dosage to have the same effect and making it difficult for normal activities such as sex or eating pleasurable again. The extended amygdala controls feelings. When someone experiences withdrawals, they tend to use drugs again to subside the feelings produced from the extended amygdala, such as anxiety, depression, and irritability. Whereas, the prefrontal cortex deals with how someone thinks and reacts. During drug abuse the shifted controls of the first two result in having more impulsive reactions using the prefrontal cortex. Leading in a person to have less self-control over their use of illicit drugs. Other drugs, like opioids, affect the brain stem which can slow down breathing, induce sleep, and increase heart rate causing an overdose (NIDA 2018).

Drug abuse stems from the euphoric feeling a person can get from taking an illicit drug. An overage of dopamine being transferred from

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neurotransmitters is what causes the euphoria. When this happens, it triggers the brain to think that these chemicals are now ‘ normal’ and once halting the illicit drug use it will be harder to enjoy pleasure from regular activities one used to like. Drug abusers have fixes. These fixes can turn them to criminal behavior, according to the drug enslavement theory (p. 281, Thio). The drug enslavement theory says that users are forced into a life of crime from poverty of consistently buying drugs to feed their addiction. These people are described as “ deficit users” because they have social disadvantages of being poor, uneducated, and economically unskilled (p. 281, Thio). The other theory stated in Thio’s book on deviant behavior is the general deviance syndrome theory. This theory defines drug users were criminal before the use of drugs, they just decided to use drugs while continuing to commit crimes. Drug use increases the tendency of criminal activity, not forming criminal behavior.

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