



Research Snippet

Substance Use on Day of Offence in a Sample of Male Federal Offenders

KEY WORDS: *substance abuse, male offenders, computerized assessment, current offence, influence, alcohol, drugs*

Impetus

Research has established the association between criminal offending and substance use. Examining the specific substances used by offenders on the day of their offence(s) will provide a greater understanding of this relationship.

What we did

In total, 10,264^{1,2} offenders completed the Computerized Assessment of Substance Abuse (CASA)³ between fiscal year (FY) 2006/07 and 2009/10⁴ on intake to the federal correctional system. We examined the percentage of offenders who reported being under the influence of alcohol or other drugs on the day of their current offence. For those under the influence, the types of substances used were examined. Trends in the type of substance used over time were also explored.

What we found

Overall, 49% (n = 5,045) of the sample reported being under the influence on the day of their current offence. Of those who reported being under the influence, 28% of the sample reported being under the influence of alcohol, 48% reported being under the influence of drugs, and 23% reported being under the influence of both alcohol and drugs.

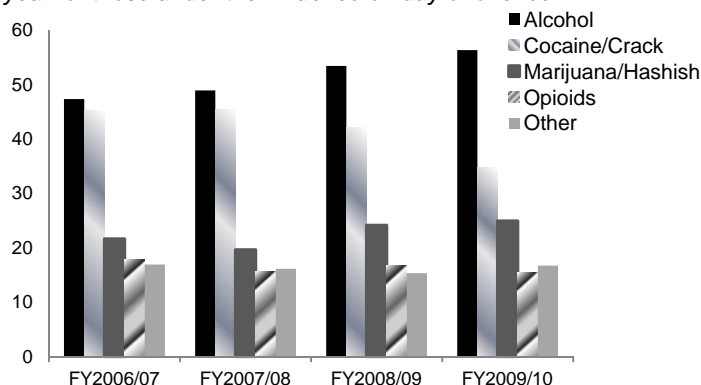
In terms of substance type consumed on the day of offence, over half (52%) reported being under the influence of alcohol, while 42% reported cocaine, 23% marijuana, 16% opioids, and 16% other drugs^{5,6}.

Figure 1 examines the distribution of substance type used across fiscal years and highlights the changes from FY2006/07 to FY2009/10:

- The proportion of offenders who reported being under the influence of alcohol on the day of offence increased from 47% to 56%.
- Offenders who reported being under the influence of cocaine decreased from 45% to 35%.

- The proportion reporting being under the influence of marijuana increased slightly (22% to 25%), while opioid use decreased slightly (18% to 15%) and other drugs remained constant (17%).

Figure 1: Substance types used on day of offence by fiscal year for those under the influence on day of offence



What it means

Half of all offenders reported being under the influence on the day they committed their current offence(s), thereby reinforcing the link between crime and substance use. However, there is a temporal trend towards fewer offenders reporting that they were under the influence of illicit drugs such as cocaine and opioids on the day of the offence and more having used alcohol. Further research could examine the link between substance abuse problem severity and types of substances used on the day of offence and explore potential time trends in the type of crimes committed while under the influence, building on the work of Ternes & Johnson (2011).

References

Ternes, M., & Johnson, S. (2011). *Linking type of substance use and type of crime in male offenders (RS11-6)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.

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For more information

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¹ Excludes offenders appealing sentence/conviction.

² This represents 67% of newly admitted Federal offenders during this time period.

³ The Computerized Assessment of Substance Abuse (CASA) is administered to male offenders upon reception into federal custody in Canada to determine the existence or severity of a substance abuse problem and to collect information about other related variables such as substance use on the day of current offence.

⁴ Fiscal years run from April 1 to March 31.

⁵ Some offenders reported more than one drug type; therefore percentages do not equal 100%.

⁶ Other drugs include amphetamines, benzodiazepines, mushrooms, PCP, LSD, MDA, barbiturates, Quaaludes, inhalants, steroids, and other.