



Research Snippet

Urinalysis Results from the 2012/13 Fiscal Year

KEY WORDS: *urinalysis, federally incarcerated offenders*

What it means

Over half of all federally-incarcerated offenders received urinalysis requests in the 2012/13 fiscal year. Most of these requests (81%) were part of the random testing program. The vast majority of random urinalysis results were negative, with 6% of tests positive for drug use. A comparatively higher proportion of positive results (32%) and refusals (22%) were identified through the use of reasonable grounds testing. The higher positive rate for reasonable grounds testing suggests that correctional staff were relatively accurate in their assessment of the need for testing.

The most commonly found drug for all types of urinalysis requests was THC.¹ THC can be detected in urine up to five weeks for chronic heavy users, whereas other drugs (e.g., cocaine, opioids) are undetectable in a matter of hours or days. Therefore, the high proportion of positive tests for THC may be an indication that it is offenders' drug of choice or the results may be an artifact of the various times drugs are detectable in urine.

What we found

During the 2012/13 fiscal year, 19,513 offenders were incarcerated or admitted under federal jurisdiction. A total of 13,976 urinalysis samples were requested, representing 9,188 offenders. Adjusting for days spent in prison, 63% of federally incarcerated offenders received a urinalysis request. Approximately 81% of these requests were based on random selection (11,329 requests), 10% were based on reasonable grounds (1,467 requests), and 9% were based on community contact or regular monitoring.

For random urinalysis requests, 6% of tests were positive (84% negative), 7% of offenders refused to provide a sample, and 3% were not tested.² As displayed in Figure 1, most positive results (80%) contained THC, followed by opioids (14%), amphetamines (3%), methadone (2%), benzodiazepines (1%), and cocaine (1%).

For reasonable grounds urinalysis requests, 32% of tests were positive (44% negative), 22% of sample requests were refused, and 2% could not be tested. Of the positive results, the majority (83%) contained THC, followed by opioids (7%), amphetamines (5%), cocaine (3%), benzodiazepines (2%), and Methadone (1%; see Figure 2).

Why we did this study

To explore the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) interdiction practices, we examined results from offenders who were asked to provide a urinalysis sample during the 2012/13 fiscal year. Reasons offenders may be asked to provide a urine sample for analysis include the random testing program (5% of the population each month), reasonable grounds to suspect drug use, or for community contact or regular monitoring. The purpose of the random urinalysis program is to increase institutional security by deterring institutional drug use.

Figure 1. Drug types found in random urinalysis.

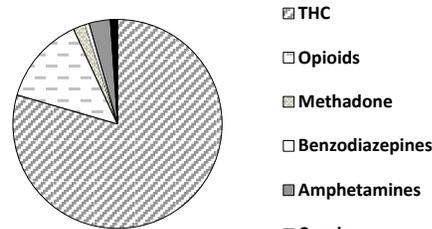
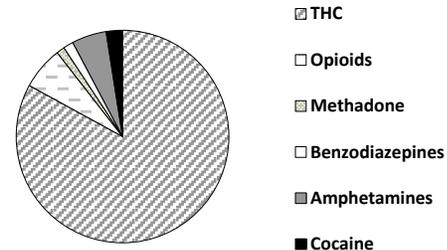


Figure 2. Drug types found in reasonable grounds urinalysis.



What we did

We examined all available institutional urinalysis records in the Offender Management System for the 2012/13 fiscal year to determine the proportion of offenders who were asked to provide a urine sample, and to assess the outcomes of CSC's random urinalysis program and urinalysis requests for reasonable grounds. Urinalysis results found positive for legitimately prescribed drugs were coded as negative.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

You can also visit the website for a full list of research publications.

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¹ Tetrahydrocannabinol (the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana)
² Samples cannot be tested if they are lost, altered, or for procedural issues (e.g., improperly labeled, shipping delays).