

Drug transactions: some results from the DUMA project

By Toni Makkai, Australian Institute of Criminology

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Introduction

In the past 10 to 15 years our knowledge about patterns of drug use—in the general population and among injecting drug users—has improved considerably. This is in stark contrast with our knowledge about the criminally active population and about the drug markets they operate in. This chapter draws on the initial results of a new pilot program to monitor drug use among detainees—the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia project, or DUMA, which is funded under the Prime Minister’s National Illicit Drug Strategy. DUMA involves trained interviewers working in selected watchhouses, lockups and police stations, conducting voluntary interviews with detainees and asking them to provide a urine specimen for drug analysis (see Makkai 1999a). This is done every three months, and the results presented here are for the first year of data collection.

There are four pilot sites in three jurisdictions: Southport watchhouse; East Perth lockup; and Bankstown and Parramatta police stations. Data collection began in January 1999 in Southport and East Perth and in July in Bankstown and Parramatta. As a result, there are four quarters of data from the Queensland and Western Australian sites and two quarters from the New South Wales sites. The main requirements in selecting the sites were that there be a sufficiently high number of detainees being dealt with

by the site, that the site’s infrastructure could support the project, and that the police personnel at the site were in favour of the project.

There are a number of differences between the four sites. First, the size of the population in the catchment areas varies greatly (see Table 7.1). This in part reflects the different nature of the sites. In East Perth the site is a very large, old facility designed to take detainees from across a large part of the city. Within the city there are many police stations that have the capacity to handle a small number of detainees and the East Perth facility essentially operates to accommodate detainees that are to be held overnight or if a local police station does not have a holding cell available.

There is no large, central facility for detainees in Sydney. The local police stations deal with their own detainees and only with detainees from other parts of the city in emergencies.¹ It is rare for detainees to be held for longer than four hours in these facilities. The Southport watchhouse caters for the entire Queensland South Eastern region. It is a modern facility with the capacity to hold detainees overnight. It also serves the local magistrates court.

Police districts do not always overlap with census districts, so it is difficult to determine the precise characteristics of the catchment area using census data. Postcodes and local census districts were used to match the police districts as closely as possible. Table 7.1 provides some basic census data on each catchment area.² There is little difference between East Perth, Bankstown and Parramatta in terms of mean age, the per cent of males and the per cent of Australian-born people. The mean age for Southport tends to be slightly higher and that site has a higher per cent of Australian-born people. The catchment population in Southport tends to have slightly fewer people in employment and both Bankstown and Southport have a higher per cent of people who left school at 14 years or younger. The per cent of people who have never married ranges from 28 to 32 per cent.

There is a view that drug law enforcement of drug markets can only result in increased harms, particularly health harms. However, research within Australia, and internationally, provides some evidence that law enforcement can have positive effects in monitoring

Table 7.1: Profile of geographical area surrounding DUMA sites

Criterion	Southport	East Perth	Parramatta	Bankstown
Number of people in catchment area	332 952	29 4957	58 962	158 358
Mean age of population (years)	39	38	36	37
Proportion male (%)	49	48	50	49
Proportion Australian born (%)	69	62	61	63
Proportion employed (%)	86	92	91	95
Proportion left school 14 years or younger (%)	16	12	11	20
Proportion never married (%)	28	32	28	29

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996 census).

Table 7.2: Activity in the drug market: adult male detainees

	Southport	East Perth	Parramatta	Bankstown
Per cent obtained illegal drugs in preceding 30 days				
No	35	30	40	33
Yes	65	70	60	67
(n)	(464)	(423)	(158)	(129)
Per cent used drug in the preceding 30 days				
Cannabis	60	66	57	50
Amphetamines	31	34	11	10
Heroin	15	23	34	36
Cocaine	3	6	8	14

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology DUMA collection (1999, computer file).

local drug markets. Weatherburn and Lind (1999) suggest that law enforcement keeps the price of heroin artificially high via the risks and costs to dealers and traffickers. In theory this deters both consumers and providers from entering the market. Street level law enforcement activity is also an important consideration in the desire to seek treatment amongst illicit drug users (Weatherburn et al. 1999) and Hall (1996) has shown once users enter methadone maintenance they reduce their criminal activity quite noticeably.

Drug markets have been defined as ‘a set of arrangements which bring buyers and sellers into contact in order to trade’ (Edmunds et al. 1996, p. 3). These markets can operate at both the global and local level; however the market that most people come into contact with, either directly or indirectly, is at the local level. It is here that the harms of problem drug use manifest themselves so starkly—the various social problems (unemployment, health), associated crime to support use, and the downward decline of communities with open drug markets (Edmunds et al. 1996, p. 1). If we accept that law enforcement has a legitimate role in regulating such markets, understanding the parameters and the nature of the local market becomes central to locally-based enforcement initiatives (Jacobson 1999). The kinds of questions that need to be answered are whether the market is ‘closed’ (from private homes or commercial premises) or ‘open’ (on the street or in parks); whether buyers are local or not; and how drug deals are facilitated (ie whether the person is known to them, how they make contact with the dealer; whether they use cash). Law enforcement also needs to know whether the parameters of the local market vary for different illicit drugs.

This chapter focuses on the drug-market component of the questionnaire, which asks a range of questions about how people obtain their drugs, how often they buy drugs, who they buy from, and whether they pay cash. Since DUMA is a pilot project, in the first year of operation the questionnaire has been undergoing changes. As a result, some questions were not always asked in every quarter. This section of the questionnaire relies on self-reported involvement in drug markets, so the material in this chapter, including the data on drug use, is based on the questionnaire responses and not the urinalysis results. Urinalysis data are reported elsewhere (see Makkai & Feather 1999; Lampard et al. 1999).

Activity in the drug market

All detainees are interviewed, regardless of the offence. As a result people who are charged with violent, property, traffic (including drink driving) and other offences are included in the study. Not all

the detainees report taking illicit drugs, however, and the drug-market grid is restricted to people who report involvement in illegal drugs in the preceding 30 days.³ Depending on the site, DUMA collects data from males, females and juveniles. The female and juvenile samples are too small at this stage for statistical analysis, so this chapter reports data for adult males only. Table 7.2 shows the per cent of adult males in each site that reported obtaining illegal drugs in the preceding 30 days; these people can be classified as active in the illegal drug market, as either consumers or providers. The observed differences between the sites are not statistically significant: the per cent of detainees reporting drug involvement in the preceding 30 days ranges from 60 per cent in Parramatta to 70 per cent in East Perth.

The second part of Table 7.2 focuses on detainees who were using illicit drugs in the preceding 30 days and the specific drugs they were using. Activity is highest in the cannabis market, followed by amphetamines and heroin and then cocaine. More than 50 per cent of all detainees brought to the police station self-report that they had used this drug in the preceding 30 days. There are however some noticeable, and statistically significant, differences in terms of use of amphetamines and heroin between the four sites. Whereas around one-third of all detainees in the Sydney sites reported recent use of heroin this was around one tenth in the other two sites. The reverse was however true for amphetamines; considerably more detainees reported using amphetamines in Southport and East Perth than heroin. The level of recent use in the cocaine market is markedly lower—between 3 and 14 per cent of all detainees reported recent activity. The level of activity is however significantly higher in the Bankstown site relative to the other sites.

Profile of detainees

Table 7.3 summarises information on some characteristics of the sample. Taking first the sample as a whole, the mean age of detainees is between 26 and 29 years. Between 57 and 61 per cent had never married, while between 26 and 36 per cent failed to complete year 10 at school. Most were unemployed—26 to 36 per cent reported that they were employed full time—and most reported receiving a government benefit (between 50 and 66 per cent). These patterns are generally consistent for all the sites. With one exception, none of the differences observed is statistically significant between sites; the exception is obtaining a government benefit, for which the per cent of male detainees was lower for Bankstown than for the other sites.

Detainees are very different from the general population within the catchment areas, as shown by the census data in Table 7.1. They are disproportionately more likely to be younger (by about 10 years) and single (about double) than the general population. Detainees also have lower levels of employment than the population in the catchment areas. Differences in the measures and the different schooling systems across jurisdictions make it difficult to compare education, but the data do seem to suggest that detainees are probably more likely to have left school at a younger age than members of the general population.

Table 7.3 also shows whether the characteristics of detainees vary for those who were ‘active’ or ‘inactive’ in the drug market. ‘Active’ is generally defined as detainees who said they obtained, for sale or use, cannabis, heroin, cocaine or amphetamines in the preceding 30 days. ‘Inactive’ refers to detainees who reported not obtaining any of these drugs in the preceding 30 days. Again, the patterns are generally consistent across all the sites, with active detainees being younger and more likely to be single, to have not completed year 10, to be unemployed, and to be receiving a government benefit.

Crime profile of detainees

Detainees can be charged with a variety of offences. Interviewers are asked to record the three most serious offences with which the person has been charged. Violent offences are classified as the most serious, followed by property, drug, drink-driving, other traffic, and ‘other’ (which includes disorder and outstanding

warrants) offences. Based on this hierarchy, individuals were assigned to one of six categories; Table 7.4 shows the results. There are four major differences across the sites.

- Parramatta has a much higher per cent of detainees whose most serious offence is property.
- Bankstown has a much higher per cent of detainees whose most serious offence is drugs.
- Southport has a much higher per cent of detainees whose most serious offence is traffic related (including drink-driving).
- East Perth has a much higher per cent of detainees whose most serious offence is classified as ‘other offences’.

These differences are statistically significant and demonstrate the localised nature of criminal activity, even though the socio-economic profile of detainees is relatively similar. It may also reflect the localised nature of policing.

In terms of drug offences, across all the sites, the percentage of detainees charged with this offence is relatively small. Of 1402 detainees only 180 (12.8 per cent) were charged with a drug offence. It is difficult to make comparisons with the number of offenders Australia wide as the ABS does not publish data on persons processed. Data from 1998–99 for Queensland show that of all persons processed 17.7 per cent were arrested for a drug offence (Queensland Police Service 1999). In Victoria the comparable figure is 11 per cent (Victoria Police 1998) and in Western Australia

Table 7.3: Profile of adult male detainees

Characteristic	Southport	East Perth	Parramatta	Bankstown
Mean age (years)				
Active	26.9	25.8	27.5	25.2
Inactive	31.4	33.1	34.0	30.8
Total adult males	28	28	29	26
Per cent single				
Active	63	64	64	68
Inactive	48	56	46	47
Total adult males	58	61	57	61
Per cent did not complete year 10				
Active	29	36	43	29
Inactive	22	23	25	29
Total adult males	26	32	36	29
Per cent employed				
Active	22	25	14	35
Inactive	41	32	37	37
Total adult males	29	27	23	35
Per cent obtaining government benefit				
Active	70	67	78	56
Inactive	50	58	48	40
Total adult males	63	65	66	50

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology DUMA collection (1999, computer file).

it was 21 per cent for 1997–98 (Western Australia Police, unpublished). These data show that the number of individuals processed for specific drug offences does not constitute the majority of arrestees. However the impact on policing is found in terms of the associated criminal activity, such as acquisitive crimes, that are routinely engaged in by dependent illicit drug users.

Table 7.4 shows the criminal profile of active and inactive participants in the local drug market. In all four sites the profile varies significantly between active and inactive participants. Active participants are much more likely than inactive participants to have been charged with either a property or a drug-related offence. The relationship between activity and property offending is most striking in Parramatta, where 58 per cent of active drug-market participants were charged with a property offence as their most serious charge.

In all sites, however, a noteworthy number of detainees reported recent drug-market activity when being arrested for other offences. For example, in Bankstown 20 per cent of active participants were arrested for a violent offence and 10 per cent for a traffic offence other than drink-driving. In Southport 12 per cent of active participants were charged with drink-driving and a further 21 per cent were charged with ‘other’ traffic offences. Between 13 and 35 per cent of active participants across all sites were charged with other offences such as outstanding warrants and disorder.

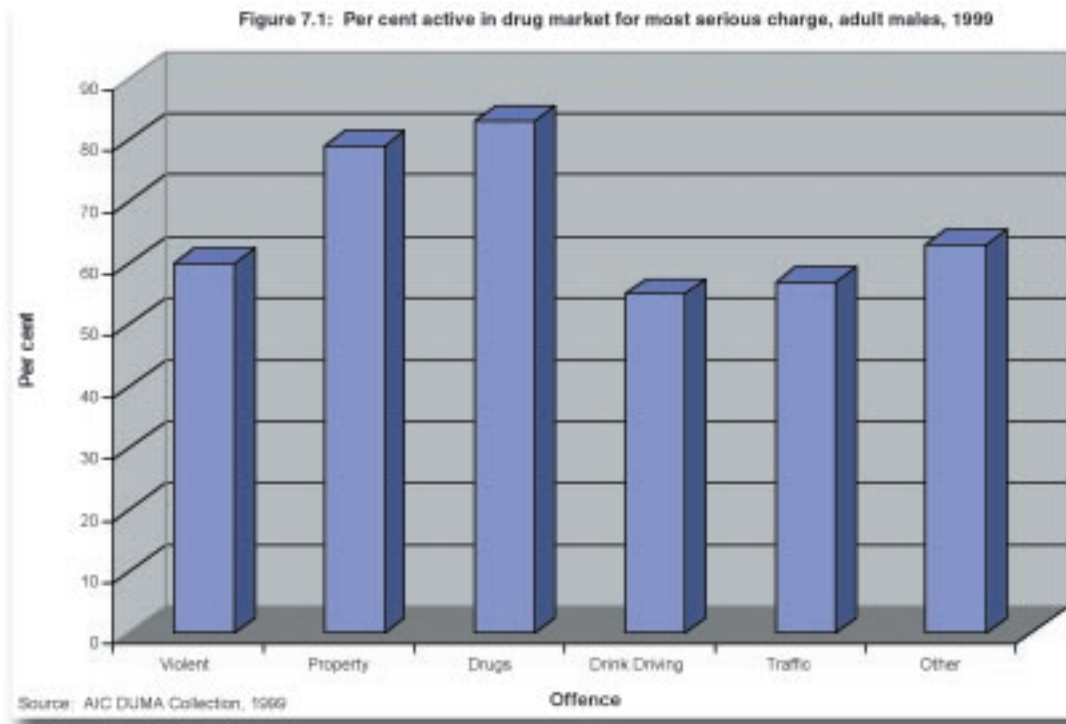
Figure 7.1 shows the per cent of detainees who reported being active participants within each charge category.⁶ It is very clear that property offenders are highly likely to be active in the drug market, but so are detainees whose most serious charge does not involve property offences. Seventy-nine per cent of all those charged with a property offence reported activity in the drug market in the preceding 30 days, as did 63 per cent of those charged with ‘other’ offences, 60 per cent of those charged with a violent offence, 57 per cent of those charged with a traffic offence other than drink driving, and 55 per cent of those charged with drink-driving.

The level of association between violent and property offences and drug activity is much higher than that found among injecting drug users (see Makkai 1999b). A fundamental premise of law enforcement strategies is deterrence; arrest is suppose to deter and prevent offending. If there is a strong overlap between illicit drug activity and other forms of offending then logically targeting drug offenders should have a positive effect on other forms of crime. The unresolved policy question is whether these positive effects would outweigh the harms that some have identified when police are overzealous in regulating the marketplace (see Maher et al. 1998). It is also worth noting that many drug users self-report criminal activity prior to involvement in the drug market (Dobinson & Ward 1985; Maher et al. 1998). Even if police do not target drug users, the people they arrest will still have a high probability of

Table 7.4: Criminal profile of adult male detainees (%)

	Southport			East Perth			Parramatta			Bankstown		
	Total	Active	Inactive	Total	Active	Inactive	Total	Active	Inactive	Total	Active	Inactive
Most serious charge for current arrest												
Violent	14	14	15	19	17	25	17	13	22	21	20	24
Property	21	26	13	22	25	15	48	58	31	26	32	13
Drugs	10	13	4	9	11	4	7	7	9	15	18	8
Drink-driving	14	12	18	7	7	7	8	4	14	6	2	13
Traffic	23	21	27	8	6	11	5	4	5	13	10	21
Other	18	15	23	36	35	38	15	13	19	19	19	22
(n)	(459)	(297)	(162)	(416)	(293)	(123)	(149)	(91)	(58)	(120)	(82)	(38)
Prior criminal history												
Per cent arrested and charged in preceding 12 months	44	51	33	53	58	42	54	67	33	49	61	26
Per cent been in prison in preceding 12 months	15	20	6	16	19	8	26	30	19	14	15	12
Prior drug history												
Per cent used drugs before committing offence	39	54	11	43	52	23	42	58	18	32	38	21
Per cent ever sold/ manufacture /transported illegal drugs	39	53	14	37	48	11	29	40	11	25	31	14

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology DUMA collection (1999, computer file).



being an active drug participant. Thus arrest, regardless of the offence, represents in many cases an opportunity for drug intervention programs.

Detainees were also asked if they had previously been arrested and charged and if they had had a prison sentence in the preceding 12 months. As expected, considerably fewer detainees reported that they had spent time in a prison, although the numbers are not insignificant: between 14 and 26 per cent reported they had been in prison in the preceding 12 months. The difference between Parramatta and the other sites is statistically significant: around a quarter of the detainees at this site reported imprisonment in the preceding 12 months. In all the sites active drug-market participants were more likely to report that they had been in prison in the preceding 12 months, although the differences are statistically significant only for Southport and East Perth.

About half the detainees reported that they had been arrested and charged at some other time during the preceding 12 months. Detainees at Southport were significantly less likely to have been arrested than detainees at the other sites. Again, those who had recently been active in the drug market were much more likely than inactive detainees to report that they had been arrested and charged in the preceding 12 months. This was the case for 51 per cent of the active drug market participants in Southport, 58 per cent in East Perth, 61 per cent in Bankstown, and 67 per cent in Parramatta. The prior arrest and imprisonment history suggests that a sub-group of offenders are cycling through the criminal justice system and that current interventions are required to break this cycle.

Detainees were asked if they had been using drugs just before their arrest (consumers) and whether they had ever sold, manufactured, or transported drugs (providers). Illegal drug use just before an offence being committed is relatively common: the per cent ranged from 32 per cent in Bankstown to 43 per cent in East Perth. Studies of prisoners have found higher rates of self-reported intoxication at the time of the offence (see Makkai 1999b) and highlight that, although the arrested and incarcerated populations overlap, they are not the same (see Makkai 1999c).

Between 25 and 39 per cent reported that they had been providers of illegal drugs. Detainees in Southport and East Perth were more likely to report this kind of activity than detainees in the two Sydney sites. Aggregating across all the sites fifty-seven per cent of those who reported being providers also reported that they had consumed illegal drugs just before committing the offence for which they had been arrested. Again, those who were active in the drug market at the time of their arrest were somewhat more likely to report using drugs before their arrest and to have been involved in the drug market as a provider. With the exception of Bankstown, just over half of the active detainees reported using drugs before committing their offence; in Bankstown only 38 per cent reported this to be the case. About half the active detainees in Southport and East Perth reported being a provider at some stage; this compares with 31 per cent in Bankstown and 40 per cent in Parramatta.

The overlap between being a consumer and a provider is commonly noted in the literature: many consumers often resort to selling to supplement their income (Grapendaal et al. 1995; Maher et al. 1998). This overlap makes it difficult to neatly divide the drug market into two discrete components, and some researchers have argued that the policy focus needs to be on regulating ‘consumerism’ rather than on supply or demand strategies (see Fitzgerald et al. 1999).

Drug transactions

Table 7.5 shows that the vast majority of detainees pay cash for their drugs, which suggests that drug markets are primarily cash markets, regardless of the type of drug. There are, however, variations between sites and between drugs. The general picture to emerge from these data is as follows.

- Detainees from the Southport site are more likely to pay cash for any of the drugs.
- For all sites detainees are more likely to report paying cash for heroin than for the other drugs.
- A higher per cent of detainees from both Southport and East

Perth reported obtaining all the drugs either as a gift, through sharing or producing than in either of the Sydney sites; this is particularly the case for cannabis and amphetamines.

- Detainees are most likely to report obtaining cannabis either as a gift, through sharing or producing across all the sites.
- A higher per cent of detainees from the two Sydney sites reported exchanging goods or drugs, or both, for cannabis, cocaine and amphetamines than did their counterparts in Southport or East Perth.
- Detainees from all sites reported exchanging goods or drugs, or both, for heroin, but this was less common in the Sydney sites.

Although a number points can be drawn from Table 7.5, two are highlighted here. The first is that, somewhat surprisingly, detainees in the Sydney sites were more likely to report exchanging goods or drugs, or both, for amphetamines than heroin; none reported obtaining amphetamines as a gift or through sharing/producing the drug, unlike detainees in Southport and East Perth. Before 1999, however, Sydney police targeted the stolen property market on the basis of work done by Stevenson and Forysthe (1999): the lower reported rates for exchanging goods and drugs for heroin in the Sydney sites may thus reflect local law enforcement activity.

The second point is that, generally speaking, detainees in East Perth were less likely to report paying cash and somewhat more likely to report obtaining illegal drugs either as a gift or through sharing or producing the drug themselves. Regardless of site, though, those who pay are far less likely to report that had obtained their drugs either through sharing, growing or for free. This suggests that among detainees there may be two groups of drug users: those who are into the drug cash economy and those who use the drug only when they don't have to pay for it. This needs further study

because it has important implications for regulating local drug markets. Clearly cash based markets are more easy to regulate than 'gift' based markets particularly if they are open markets. There may be situational factors that facilitate the development of particular cash based markets. Jacobson (1999) points out that bank cash-points and post offices may be such facilitators.

In the third and fourth quarters detainees were also asked if they bought drugs on credit and paid later. Ten detainees responded that they obtained cannabis and amphetamines on credit and three reported obtaining heroin on credit; nobody reported obtaining cocaine on credit. This reaffirms that the drug market detainees tap into is primarily cash based at present, that detainees have the economic capacity to enter this market, and that the product is within their price range.

Drug sources

Detainees were asked from whom they obtained their drugs. The data for cocaine are, however, based on small samples and should be interpreted with caution; figures for that drug generally are not discussed here for that reason. A number of general trends can be seen from the data in Table 7.6.

- Most detainees used a regular source for their last purchase, regardless of the drug.
- Considerably fewer detainees reported using a new source or a stranger for their last purchase, regardless of the drug.
- Detainees were more likely to report using a regular source for heroin purchases than for the other drugs.
- Detainees were more likely to report using a new source for amphetamines than for the other drugs.

Table 7.5: Per cent of detainees obtaining drugs in the preceding 30 days

	Southport	East Perth	Parramatta	Bankstown
Paid cash for drugs				
Cannabis	62	52	58	58
Cocaine	60	31	50	56
Heroin	86	77	85	78
Amphetamines	65	60	61	54
Obtained as gift/shared/grew/produced				
Cannabis	24	31	19	25
Cocaine	7	19	8	6
Heroin	9	7	4	2
Amphetamines	16	16	0	0
Exchanged goods/drugs				
Cannabis	6	6	9	8
Cocaine	0	8	8	11
Heroin	14	13	9	11
Amphetamines	7	11	11	15

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology DUMA collection (1999, computer file).

Table 7.6: Drug source for the last time drugs were bought, adult male detainees (%)

Source	Southport	East Perth	Parramatta	Bankstown
Regular source				
Cannabis	48	54	67	65
Cocaine	78	50	17	70
Heroin	72	73	61	69
Amphetamines	57	48	46	71
Occasional source				
Cannabis	43	32	25	16
Cocaine	11	50	67	20
Heroin	18	20	17	20
Amphetamines	25	37	36	0
New source				
Cannabis	9	15	8	19
Cocaine	11	0	17	10
Heroin	10	7	22	11
Amphetamines	19	15	18	29

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology DUMA collection (1999, computer file).

Regular suppliers of cannabis were more common in Sydney than in East Perth and least common in Southport. This is consistent with the higher proportion that reported obtaining the drug either as a gift or via sharing or producing in Southport and East Perth. Presumably people engaged in regular supplying come to the attention of 'others' at some point and in theory it may be easier to police than transactions that occur between strangers. In the latter case access to the market may be random, opportunity based, and fluctuate. However, stranger based transactions may occur at geographical points in the city where buyers know an open drug market operates. Once such markets become established, they become visible presumably increasing law enforcement risks.

The data indicate the per cent that obtained heroin from a regular supplier is somewhat lower in the two Sydney sites, particularly Parramatta. This is consistent with the finding, discussed later, that just over half of the detainees at Parramatta who were active in the drug market reported that their last purchase was either on the street or in an outdoor area.

Buying drugs

Detainees were asked where they last purchased their drugs. Detainees in Southport and East Perth were somewhat more likely than those in the Sydney sites to report that they obtained cannabis in a private home. Given the higher rates of 'free' cannabis in these sites, this may be a reflection of greater use of cannabis in social settings. Makkai and McAllister (1997) have shown that a large per cent of the general population who use cannabis report using it at home, at parties, or at a friend's place. Cannabis is also obtained on the street and in other outdoor areas, particularly in Bankstown. Thirty-three per cent of detainees in Bankstown reported that they had obtained their cannabis on the street; this compares with 24 per cent in Southport, 18 per cent in Parramatta and 14 per cent in East Perth.

Heroin tends to be the drug most likely to be available on the street or in an outdoor area. The development of street-level heroin

markets in other Australian locations has been noted in ethnographic studies (see Maher et al. 1998; Fitzgerald et al. 1999). Fifty-four per cent of the Parramatta detainees who were active in the heroin market reported obtaining their drug on the street, as did 48 per cent in Southport. Detainees in these two sites were slightly less likely to report obtaining the drug in a private home. Around one-third of detainees in East Perth (36 per cent) and Bankstown (30 per cent) reported obtaining heroin on the street or in an outdoor area. Detainees from these two sites were slightly more likely to report obtaining the drug in a private home—42 per cent in East Perth and 44 per cent in Bankstown.

Detainees from all the sites were less likely to report that they obtained their last purchase from inside a public building: 10 per cent or less reported making their last purchase in this setting. Where this did occur the data seem to suggest that it is more common for heroin and amphetamines.

The data on where detainees buy drugs show that both on and off the street are important locations. Law enforcement strategies to regulate the market need to take account of the different features of local drug markets if interventions are to be effective. Research has shown that drug dealers in open locations 'will operate only if there is good access to them: users and dealers must be able to get to and away from the sites easily and quickly' (Jacobson 1999, p. 19). Drug markets may also be co-located to places where there is access to drug equipment, thus the location of needle exchanges and injecting rooms need to be carefully placed and monitored (Weatherburn & Lind 1999; Jacobson 1999). Dealing with 'private' closed locations may require co-operative strategies to increase place management by getting landlords to control tenants and improving housing and planning policies so that large numbers of individuals who are involved or 'susceptible' to the local drug scene are not co-located (Edmunds et al. 1996). In addition fostering natural surveillance by the local community could highlight drug dealing from private residences.

Table 7.7: Place of purchase last time drugs were bought, adult male detainees (%)

Place of purchase	Southport	East Perth	Parramatta	Bankstown
Private home				
Cannabis	46	55	38	31
Cocaine	33	50	33	28
Heroin	34	42	32	44
Amphetamines	39	58	61	23
Public building				
Cannabis	5	5	10	5
Cocaine	7	4	0	11
Heroin	10	8	4	9
Amphetamines	9	8	6	8
Street or outdoor area				
Cannabis	24	14	18	33
Cocaine	20	4	33	33
Heroin	48	36	54	30
Amphetamines	29	14	0	31

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology DUMA collection (1999, computer file).

Locating drugs

Detainees were asked how they made contact with a supplier of drugs. Although there is variation between the sites, and the drugs, two broad conclusions can be drawn from the data in Table 7.8.

- Using the telephone and going to where the drug is sold are popular ways of contacting the drug provider.

- Many detainees buy their drugs within their own suburb.

More specifically, a greater per cent of detainees reported that they used the telephone to contact their heroin provider, as opposed to their cannabis provider. In the case of East Perth, 74 per cent of detainees who were active in the heroin market reported this method

Table 7.8: Contact source adult male detainees (%)

Contact source	Southport	East Perth	Parramatta	Bankstown
Telephone				
Cannabis	28	24	27	34
Cocaine	53	31	42	50
Heroin	58	74	35	50
Amphetamines	31	42	28	39
Going to where drug is sold				
Cannabis	25	20	23	41
Cocaine	27	19	50	44
Heroin	49	50	54	44
Amphetamines	33	26	11	46
Bought drug in own suburb				
Cannabis	28	62	26	55
Cocaine	75	0	67	67
Heroin	40	77	91	55
Amphetamines	37	67	60	67

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology DUMA collection (1999, computer file).

of contact. This was also found to be the major method of contacting dealers in a UK closed market (Edmunds et al. 1996). With the exception of Bankstown, going out to contact the supplier is also a popular way of contacting the source, although this varies according to drug and site. In Bankstown almost the same per cent of respondents in each of the specific markets reported that they contacted their source by going to where the drugs are sold. These data suggest that in all the sites there are both open and closed markets. Potentially these two markets can co-exist at the same place as described in a series of cases studies of local UK markets. The researchers found in one of their closed markets buyers often lived locally, contacted their source primarily by telephone and then the exchange took place in the open market at special meeting places. Those who could not access the closed market would buy from strangers, obtaining lower quality drugs, with high risks of violence. Many of the participants in the open market came from across London (Edmunds et al. 1996).

Parramatta detainees reported using the telephone least for obtaining their heroin; they are the most likely to report going to where the drugs are sold to contact their source and they are more likely to report buying heroin within their suburb: 91 per cent of these heroin-using detainees reported buying from within their suburb; this compares with 77 per cent in East Perth, 55 per cent in Bankstown and 40 per cent in Southport. Detainees in Southport and Parramatta are less likely to report buying their cannabis, and to a lesser extent their amphetamines, within their local suburb than detainees in East Perth and Bankstown.

Making connections

Those who reported a regular heroin supplier were not significantly more or less likely to go outside their suburb than those who had not approached a regular supplier, regardless of site. There was, however, a significant difference for cannabis suppliers in Southport and amphetamine suppliers in East Perth. Those with a local cannabis supplier were much more likely (66 per cent) to buy within their suburb than those without a regular supplier (39 per cent) in Southport. This might suggest that there are many suppliers in the Southport area, so users do not have travel far to locate a source. Detainees from East Perth were more likely to go outside their suburb to approach their regular supplier for amphetamines: 50 per cent of those who went outside their suburb approached a regular supplier; this compares with 34 per cent who approached a regular supplier within their suburb. Although speculative, it may be either that suppliers are harder to locate or that buyers go to particular venues to buy—for example, they buy at parties or in pubs and clubs. Table 7.7 shows that over half the East Perth detainees who bought amphetamines did so in a private home.

There is considerable overlap among detainees who use the telephone to contact their amphetamine source and their heroin and cannabis source. Aggregating across the sites, 42 per cent of respondents who telephoned their amphetamine source also telephoned their cannabis source and 36 per cent of respondents who telephoned for amphetamines also telephoned for heroin.

Are the sources the same or different? It is possible that the same source supplies all the drugs: hence the common method of contact. Furthermore, detainees who were active in more than one of the drug markets tended to buy all their drugs within their suburb. Thus all the active heroin users also bought their cannabis within their suburb and 86 per cent of them bought their amphetamines locally. Of those who bought their amphetamines locally, 80 per cent also reported buying their cannabis locally.

Further analysis of the data shows that detainees who last contacted their heroin, amphetamine or cannabis source by telephone tended to be more likely to report that their last purchase was from a regular supplier, rather than an occasional supplier or an unknown person. Aggregating across the sites, we find that 80 per cent of those who telephoned their heroin source reported buying from a regular supplier. This was also the case for 66 per cent of active amphetamine detainees and 60 per cent of active cannabis detainees.

Conclusion

The data shows that drug markets vary according to site and drug. Future work—both at the Australian Institute of Criminology and at the sites—will augment our knowledge of the way local drug markets function. The strength of DUMA lies in its continuing consistent methodology and questions; in this way it provides an effective monitoring and evaluation tool. But this also needs to be complemented by local ethnographic studies that cast light on the day-to-day reality of drug-using offenders in their local environment and local law enforcement monitoring systems such as Project Lerna (Fogg et al. 1999).

There are a range of harms associated with local drug markets. These include the problems associated with problem drug use, the associated crime to support consumption, the decline of local communities who have open drug markets. The policy question is once the characteristics of the market have been determined what approach should be taken. Markets are where ‘supply and demand converge’ so intervention strategies will affect both. Research has shown that the perceived risk of enforcement is a major factor affecting which markets users go to, how they use it (Edmunds et al. 1996) and entry into treatment (Weatherburn & Lind 1999). The use of drugs by detainees complicates law enforcement’s approaches to drug-related crime; they are dealing with both a ‘crime’ and a ‘health’ problem and the challenge is to get the balance right between protecting the community and protecting the individual.

A popular law enforcement intervention has been the use of crackdowns in areas where there are open drug markets. Such activities are costly, intensive and short-term, and can result in poor relations with segments of the local community and displacement (Jacobson 1999; Maher et al. 1998). Although Green (1996) has shown that displacement does not always occur. No matter what the intervention there will need to be long-lasting modifications to the site that deters continued drug dealing. This type of situational crime prevention requires police to work co-operatively with other agencies and the local community. Strategies include using local government provisions (see Green 1996); increased informal surveillance (Eck 1996); extending formal surveillance such as stop and search tactics, CCTV (Edmunds et al. 1996); drug courts (Makkai 1998); diversion into treatment at the point of arrest (Spooner et al. unpublished) and increased treatment provision (Hall 1996).

Notes

- ¹ On weekends Parramatta does deal with people arrested from across the city because of the location of the local court, but DUMA did not interview these people.
- ² The New South Wales and Queensland data were supplied by the respective police forces, while the Western Australian data are based on Australian Institute of Criminology calculations from postcode information supplied by Western Australia Police. The Institute thanks Jim Baldwin (New South Wales Police Service), Rebecca Souwer (Queensland Police Service) and Steve Guest and Ed Benier (Western Australia Police) for supplying this information.
- ³ The question in the first and second quarters was asked of each specific drug, while in the third and fourth quarters it was a general question about obtaining any illegal drugs in the preceding 30 days. Activity, as calculated for this chapter, in the first and second quarters is restricted to cannabis, heroin, cocaine and amphetamines. There was no statistically significant difference between the first and second quarter calculation and the more general question in the third and fourth quarters.
- ⁵ This low level of self-reported cocaine use is also found in the National Drug Strategy Household Survey: in 1998 only 11 out of 10 340 people from the general population reported use of cocaine in the preceding month.
- ⁶ The classification of detainees as 'active' in the drug market relies on self-reported information about obtaining drugs in the preceding 30 days. In a few cases detainees reported using drugs but not obtaining them; hence the discrepancy between those charged with a drug offence and activity in the drug market. Nineteen detainees who had been charged with a drug offence reported they had not obtained drugs in the preceding 30 days. Sixteen of the 19 did report that they had tried illegal drugs at some time: none tested positive in their urine for cocaine, heroin or amphetamines; seven tested positive for cannabis.

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