

DRUG WAR FACTS

Crime

1. The chart at the right illustrates the homicide rate in the United States from 1900 to 1998. It is important to note that each of the most violent episodes in this century coincide with the prohibition on alcohol and the escalation of the modern-day war on drugs. In 1933 the homicide rate peaked at 9.7 per 100,000 people, which was the year that alcohol prohibition was finally repealed. In 1980, the homicide rate peaked again at 10 per 100,000.

Source: US Census Data and FBI Uniform Crime Reports.

2. "The data are quite consistent with the view that Prohibition at the state level inhibited alcohol consumption, and an attempt to explain correlated residuals by including omitted variables revealed that enforcement of Prohibitionist legislation had a significant inhibiting effect as well. Moreover, both hypotheses about the effects of alcohol and Prohibition are supported by the analysis. Despite the fact that alcohol consumption is a positive correlate of homicide (as expected), Prohibition and its enforcement increased the homicide rate."

Source: Jensen, Gary F., "Prohibition, Alcohol, and Murder: Untangling Countervailing Mechanisms," Homicide Studies, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA, February 2000), p. 31.

3. "Generalizing from the findings on Prohibition, we can hypothesize that decriminalization would increase the use of the previously criminalized drug, but would decrease violence associated with attempts to control illicit markets and as resolutions to disputes between buyers and sellers. Moreover, because the perception of violence associated with the drug market can lead people who are not directly involved to be prepared for violent self-defense, there could be additional reductions in peripheral settings when disputes arise (see Blumstein & Cork, 1997; Sheley & Wright, 1996)."

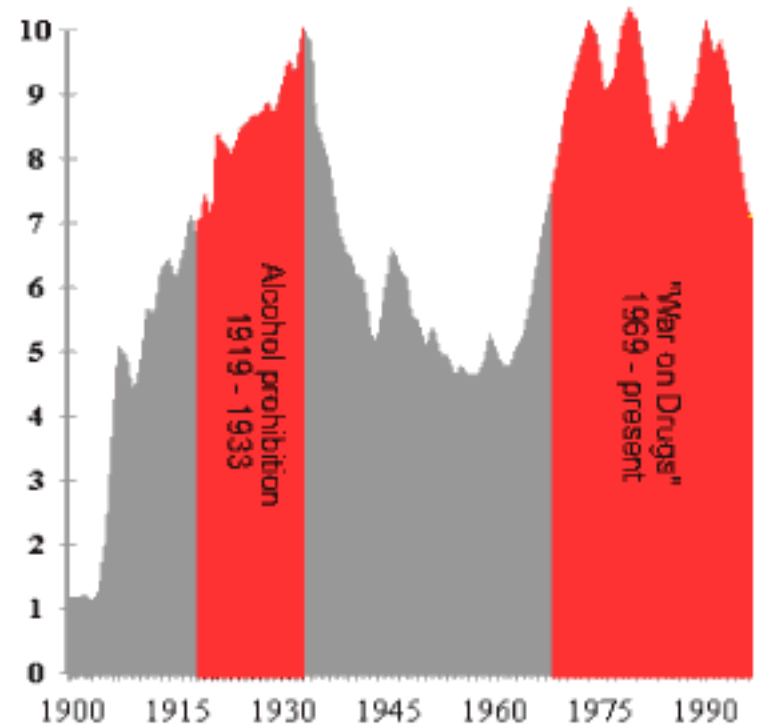
Source: Jensen, Gary F., "Prohibition, Alcohol, and Murder: Untangling Countervailing Mechanisms," Homicide Studies, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA, February 2000), pp. 33-4.

4. "Since the definition of homicide is similar in most countries, absolute comparisons of rates are possible. For the period 1999 to 2001, the average rate (the number of homicides per 100,000 population) was 1.6 in the EU with the highest rates in Finland (2.9), Northern Ireland (2.7) and Scotland (2.2). For the other countries, the highest rates were found in Russia (22.1), Estonia (10.6), Lithuania (10.6) and the USA (5.6)."

Source: Barclay, Gordon & Cynthia Tavares, "International Comparisons of Criminal Justice Statistics 2001," Home Office Bulletin 12/03 (London, England, UK: Home Office Research, Development, and Statistics Directorate, October 24, 2003), p. 3.

5. The Canadian Medical Association Journal published research on the impact of a police crackdown on a

Murder in America
Homicides per 100,000 population
1900 - 1997 (FBI Uniform Crime Reports)



public illicit drug market in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) section of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The researchers found that:

"We detected no reduction in drug use frequency or drug price in response to a large-scale police crackdown on drug users in Vancouver's DTES. The evidence that drugs became more difficult to obtain was consistent with reports of displacement of drug dealers and was supported by the significantly higher rates of reporting that police presence had affected where drugs were used, including changes in neighbourhood and increases in use in public places. These observations were validated by examination of needle-exchange statistics.

"Our findings are consistent with those showing that demand for illicit drugs enables the illicit drug market to adapt to and overcome enforcement-related constraints. Although evidence suggested that police presence made it more difficult to obtain drugs, this appeared to be explained by displacement of drug dealers."

Source: Wood, Evan, Patricia M. Spittal, Will Small, Thomas Kerr, Kathy Li, Robert S. Hogg, Mark W. Tyndall, Julio S.G. Montaner, Martin T. Schechter, "Displacement of Canada's Largest Public Illicit Drug Market In Response To A Police Crackdown," Canadian Medical Association Journal, May 11, 2004: 170(10), p. 1554.

6. The Canadian Medical Association Journal published research on the impact of a police crackdown on a public illicit drug market in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) section of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The researchers found that:

"Our results probably explain reports of increased injection drug use, drug-related crime and other public-order concerns in neighbourhoods where activities related to illicit drug use and the sex trade emerged or intensified in the wake of the crackdown. Such displacement has profound public-health implications if it "normalizes" injection drug use among previously unexposed at-risk youth. Furthermore, since difficulty in obtaining syringes has been shown to be a significant factor in promoting syringe sharing among IDUs in Vancouver, displacement away from sources of sterile syringes may increase the rates of bloodborne diseases. Escalated police presence may also explain the observed reduction in willingness to use a safer injection facility.³³ It is unlikely that the lack of benefit of the crackdown was due to insufficient police resources. Larger crackdowns in the United States, which often involved helicopters to supplement foot and car patrols, have not had measurable benefits and have instead been associated with substantial health and social harms."

Source: Wood, Evan, Patricia M. Spittal, Will Small, Thomas Kerr, Kathy Li, Robert S. Hogg, Mark W. Tyndall, Julio S.G. Montaner, Martin T. Schechter, "Displacement of Canada's Largest Public Illicit Drug Market In Response To A Police Crackdown," Canadian Medical Association Journal, May 11, 2004: 170(10), pp. 1554-1555.

7. In 1988 in New York City, 85% of crack-related crimes were caused by the market culture associated with illicit crack sales, primarily territorial disputes between rival crack dealers.

Source: Goldstein, P.J., Brownstein, H.H., Ryan, P.J. & Bellucci, P.A., "Crack and Homicide in New York City: A Case Study in the Epidemiology of Violence," in Reinerman, C. and Levine, H. (eds.), Crack in America: Demon Drugs and Social Justice (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 113-130.

8. The average "dealer" holds a low-wage job and sells part-time to obtain drugs for his or her own use.

Source: Reuter, P., MacCoun, R., & Murphy, P., Money from Crime: A Study of the Economics of Drug Dealing in Washington DC (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1990), pp. 49-50.

9. In 1973, there were 328,670 arrests logged in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) for drug law violations. In 2006, that number rose to 1,889,810 arrests for drug law violations logged in the UCR. Also in 2006, there were a reported 611,523 arrests for all violent crimes and 1,540,297 arrests for all property crimes, out of a total 14,380,370 arrests for all offenses.

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 1973 (Note: 1973 data supplied by the National Criminal Justice Reference Service); Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2006 (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, 2007), Table 29, from the web at http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2006/data/table_29.html and Arrest Table: Arrests for Drug Abuse Violations, from the web <http://www.fbi.gov/>

[ucr/05cius/arrests/index.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/arrests/index.html) last accessed Sept. 24, 2007.

10. Of the 1,889,810 arrests for drug law violations in 2006, 82.5% (1,559,093) were for possession of a controlled substance. Only 17.5% (330,717) were for the sale or manufacture of a drug.

Source: Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2006 (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, 2007), Table 29, from the web at http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2006/data/table_29.html and Arrest Table: Arrests for Drug Abuse Violations, from the web <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2006/arrests/index.html> last accessed Sept. 24, 2007.

11. Although people may think that the Drug War targets drug smugglers and 'King Pins,' in 2006, 43.9 percent of the 1,889,810 total arrests for drug abuse violations were for marijuana -- a total of 829,627. Of those, 738,916 people were arrested for marijuana possession alone. By contrast in 2000 a total of 734,497 Americans were arrested for marijuana offenses, of which 646,042 were for possession alone.

US Arrests							
Year	Total Arrests	Total Drug Arrests	Total Marijuana Arrests	Marijuana Trafficking/Sale Arrests	Marijuana Possession Arrests	Total Violent Crime Arrests	Total Property Crime Arrests
2006	14,380,370	1,889,810	829,627	90,711	738,916	611,523	1,540,297
2005	14,094,186	1,846,351	786,545	90,471	696,074	603,503	1,609,327
2004	14,004,327	1,745,712	771,605	87,286	684,319	590,258	1,649,825
2003	13,639,479	1,678,192	755,186	92,300	662,886	597,026	1,605,127
2002	13,741,438	1,538,813	697,082	83,096	613,986	620,510	1,613,954
2001	13,699,254	1,586,902	723,628	82,519	641,109	627,132	1,618,465
2000	13,980,297	1,579,566	734,497	88,455	646,042	625,132	1,620,928
1999	14,355,600	1,532,200	704,812	84,271	620,541	644,770	1,676,100
1998	14,528,300	1,559,100	682,885	84,191	598,694	675,900	1,805,600
1997	15,284,300	1,583,600	695,201	88,682	606,519	717,750	2,015,600
1996	15,168,100	1,506,200	641,642	94,891	546,751	729,900	2,045,600
1995	15,119,800	1,476,100	588,964	85,614	503,350	796,250	2,128,600
1990	14,195,100	1,089,500	326,850	66,460	260,390	705,500	2,217,800
1980	10,441,000	580,900	401,982	63,318	338,664	475,160	1,863,300

Sources: Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2006 (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, 2007), Table 29, from the web at http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2006/data/table_29.html and Arrest Table: Arrests for Drug Abuse Violations, from the web <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2006/arrests/index.html> last accessed Sept. 24, 2007; Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2005 (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, 2006), Table 29, from the web at http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/data/table_29.html and Arrest Table: Arrests for Drug Abuse Violations, from the web <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/arrests/index.html> last accessed Sept. 20, 2006; Crime in the United States: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2004 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2005), p. 278, Table 4.1 & p. 280, Table 29; Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2003 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2004), p. 269, Table 4.1 & and p. 270, Table 29; Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2002 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2003), p. 234, Table 4.1 & and p. 234, Table 29; Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2001 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2002), p. 232, Table 4.1 & and p. 233, Table 29; Uniform Crime Reports for the United States 2000 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2001), pp. 215-216, Tables 29 and 4.1; Uniform Crime Reports for the United States 1999 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2000), pp. 211-212; Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports for the United States 1998 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1999), pp. 209-210; Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 1997

(Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1998), p. 221, Table 4.1 & p. 222, Table 29; *Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 1996* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1997), p. 213, Table 4.1 & p. 214, Table 29; *FBI, UCR for the US 1995* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1996), pp. 207-208; *FBI, UCR for the US 1990* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1991), pp. 173-174; *FBI, UCR for the US 1980* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1981), pp. 189-191; Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Chart of arrests by age group, number and rates for total offenses, violent offenses, and property offenses, 1970-2003, Dec. 2004.*

12. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report for 2005 reported that: "Nationwide in 2005, 45.5 percent of violent crimes and 16.3 percent of property crimes were cleared by arrest or exceptional means. "Of the violent crimes of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, murder had the highest percentage—62.1 percent—of offenses cleared. "Of the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft, burglary was the offense least often cleared with 12.7 percent cleared by arrest or exceptional means. "Nationwide in 2005, 42.2 percent of arson offenses cleared by arrest or exceptional means involved juveniles, the highest percentage of all offense clearances involving only juveniles." According to the FBI: "In the UCR Program, a law enforcement agency reports that an offense is cleared by arrest, or solved for crime reporting purposes, when all of the following three conditions have been met for at least one person: Arrested. Charged with the commission of the offense. Turned over to the court for prosecution (whether following arrest, court summons, or police notice). "In its calculations, the UCR Program counts the number of offenses that are cleared, not the number of arrestees. The arrest of one person may clear several crimes, and the arrest of many persons may clear only one offense. In addition, some clearances that an agency records in a particular calendar year, such as 2005, may pertain to offenses that occurred in previous years. "Cleared by Exceptional Means "In certain situations, elements beyond law enforcement's control prevent the agency from arresting and formally charging the offender. When this occurs, the agency can clear the offense exceptionally. Law enforcement agencies must meet the following four conditions in order to clear an offense by exceptional means. The agency must have: Identified the offender. Gathered enough evidence to support an arrest, make a charge, and turn over the offender to the court for prosecution. Identified the offender's exact location so that the suspect could be taken into custody immediately. Encountered a circumstance outside the control of law enforcement that prohibits the agency from arresting, charging, and prosecuting the offender."

Source: Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2004 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2005), p. 263; *Crime in America: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2005* (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, 2006), from the web at [and http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/offenses/clearances/clearances.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/offenses/clearances/clearances.html) last accessed Sept. 20, 2006.

13. South Bank University's Criminal Policy Research Unit conducted a detailed study of the policing of cannabis in England. The study found that:
- "One in seven of all known offenders in England and Wales were arrested for the possession of cannabis.
 - "There has been a tenfold increase in the number of possession offences since the mid-1970s. There is no evidence that this increase has been an intended consequence of specific policy.
 - "Possession offences most often come to light as a by-product of other investigations.
 - "A minority of patrol officers 'specialise' in cannabis offences: 3 per cent of officers who had made any arrests for possession accounted for 20 per cent of all arrests.
 - "Arrests for possession very rarely lead to the discovery of serious crimes.
 - "Officers often turn a blind eye to possession offences, or give informal warnings.
 - "Of the 69,000 offenders who were cautioned or convicted in 1999, just over half (58 per cent) were cautioned.
 - "The financial costs of policing cannabis amount to at least £50 million a year (including sentencing costs), and absorb the equivalent of 500 full-time police officers.
 - "The researchers conclude that:
 - "- re-classification of cannabis to a Class C drug will yield some financial savings, allowing patrol officers to respond more effectively to other calls on their time;
 - "- the main benefits of reclassification would be non-financial, in removing a source of friction between the police and young people;
 - "- there would be a very small decline in detection of serious offences, but this should readily be offset by the savings in police time."

Source: "Findings: The Policing of Cannabis as a Class B Drug," (London, England: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, March 2002), p. 1.

14. Law enforcement authorities in the UK conducted an experiment in policing in the London borough of Lambeth, wherein cannabis violations were given a low priority. Researchers for PRS Consultancy Group undertook an evaluation of the program at the request of the Borough Police Commander. The researchers found that:

"The measures of police activity demonstrate that the policy has succeeded in releasing resources, and that activity against more serious offences has increased.

"During the 6 months of the evaluation, Lambeth officers issued 450 warnings. This released at least 1350 hours of officer time (by avoiding custody procedures and interviewing time), equivalent to 1.8 full-time officers. A further 1150 hours of CJU staff time was released by avoiding case file preparation.

"In comparison with the same 6 months in 2000, Lambeth officers recorded 35% more cannabis possession offences and 11% more for trafficking. In adjoining Boroughs possession offences fell by 4% and trafficking fell by 34%.

"Lambeth also increased its activity against Class A drugs relative to adjoining Boroughs."

Source: PRS Consultancy Group, "Evaluation of Lambeth's pilot of warnings for possession of cannabis - summary of final report," March 2002, p. 1.

15. A study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University confirms what many criminologists have long known: alcohol is associated with more violent crime than any illegal drug, including crack, cocaine, and heroin. Twenty-one percent of violent felons in state prisons committed their crimes while under the influence of alcohol alone. Only 3% were high on crack or powder cocaine alone and only 1% were using heroin alone.

Source: Califano, Joseph, Behind Bars: Substance Abuse and America's Prison Population, Forward by Joseph Califano, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (1998).

16. Federal statistics show that a large percentage of criminal offenders were under the influence of alcohol alone when they committed their crimes (36.3%, or a total of 1,919,251 offenders). Federal research also shows for more than 40% of convicted murderers being held in either jail or State prison, alcohol use was a factor in the crime.

Source: Greenfield, Lawrence A., Alcohol and Crime: An Analysis of National Data on the Prevalence of Alcohol Involvement in Crime (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, April 1998), pp. 20-21.

To put these numbers in perspective, see also other Drug War Facts sections on [Alcohol](#), [Civil Rights & Human Rights](#), [Prisons](#), and [Race and Prisons](#).

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